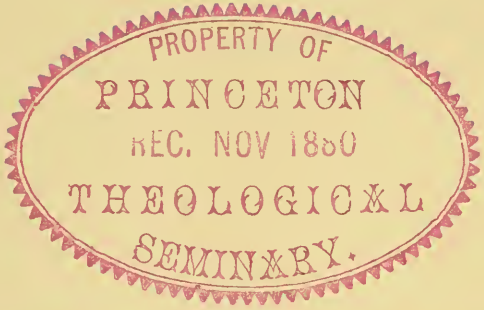
The Fathers For English Readers

THE VENERABLE BEDE



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The venerable Bede

The Fathers for English Readers.

THE VENERABLE BEDE.

BY THE

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CHAPTER I.

THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF BEDE.

THE Venerable Bede is one of the most striking figures in the history of the English Church. It would be difficult to find a parallel to him in the history of any Church. A voluminous and learned Christian writer on many subjects, theological, historical, grammatical, and physical, he sprang from an immediate ancestry of unlettered pagans. The first preacher of Christianity who visited his fathers arrived in the country only fifty years before Bede's birth. Forty years before his birth, the kings of the land were heathens; one, indeed, was worse than a heathen, for he had been called a Christian and had abjured the faith of Christ. The progress made in those forty years was marvellous. We find kings and people vying with one another in paying honour to Christian bishops and priests; churches rising in one town and village after another; large grants of land—grants too profuse, Bede says—for the foundation of monasteries. At the time when Bede was born, we find a Northumbrian noble building the monastery which after-

wards received him, employing workmen and manufacturers of glass from Italy, where he studied all the details of the monastic life, in order that his church and all his arrangements might be worthy of his holy purpose. Here, in a monastery built by one who must have passed his boyhood while the land was still pagan, Bede lived and wrote and died but one generation later. In these present times of active missionary enterprise it is difficult to imagine anything more encouraging, and more full of hopeful prophecy, than the final conversion of Northumbria, with its speedy outcome in the person of the Venerable Bede.

The life of Bede was the quiet uneventful life of a monastic student in time of peace. Very little information has been put on record respecting him, probably because there was little to record. The main outlines of his life are all that we know. There is a singular absence of personal allusion in his writings, even where some reference to himself or to his surroundings would have been natural. Thus, to take an instance, in his sermon on the dedication day of the Church at Jarrow he makes not the slightest reference to any detail of the building itself. He gives an account of the founder, describes minutely the Temple of Solomon, entering into much curious explanation of the symbolism intended by its dimensions and arrangement, and then raises his hearers at once to the Temple not made with hands.

The Venerable Bede was born in the year of our Lord 673, or possibly a year earlier. The actual place

of his birth cannot be determined. He tells us that it was somewhere in the territory assigned about the time of his birth to Benedict Biscop, who founded there the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow. The former of these, the monastery of St. Peter, on the north bank of the river Wear, was built in the year 674, and here Bede was placed at the age of seven years under the charge of the founder, who ruled the monastery as its abbat. Boys in Saxon monasteries did not fare badly. We have a colloquy in which a boy is made to describe his daily food in his monastery. He had worts (*i.e.* kitchen herbs), fish, cheese, butter, beans, and flesh meats. He drank ale when he could get it, and water when he could not: wine was too dear.

The sister monastery of St. Paul, at Jarrow, on the south bank of the Tyne, was built by Benedict in the year 682, and Bede was transferred to that establishment under Ceolfrid, its first abbat. Here he remained for the rest of his life, occupying himself in the practical work of the monks, in the priestly office, and in incessant study, literary work, and teaching.

In a striking sermon on the text, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, &c.," preached on the anniversary of Benedict Biscop's death, a sort of Commemoration Sermon, Bede gives a summary of this good man's useful life. A noble by birth, he gave up his place and prospects in the king's household, and went to Rome. There he studied monastic institutions, and was tonsured, and there he determined to spend the rest of his life. Pope Vitalian, however,

sent him to England again with Theodore, the great Archbishop of Canterbury whom England owed to the discrimination of that pontiff. King Egfrid gave him sites for two monasteries, not taking them—as Bede significantly remarks—from some one else, but giving from his own property. Here Benedict built, as has been said, Monk Wearmouth and Jarrow, the latter about five miles from Wearmouth; and over these twin establishments he ruled for many years.

Benedict frequently visited the Continent. He never came back empty,—unlike many of those who have made a continental tour, as Bede remarks. He brought over with him at various times all sorts of treasures for his monasteries. Now a supply of holy books, now the relics of martyrs; now architects for building his church, now glass-makers for filling and beautifying its windows; now masters in the art of chanting, keeping them with him a whole year; now a letter of privileges from the Pope, declaring the monasteries free from visitation. Pictures, too, he brought, representing scenes from Scripture; intending these not only for ornaments in the church, but also as a means of instruction for those who were not able to read. Indeed, he stored his monasteries so abundantly with things necessary for learning, that the inmates had at hand all the information and assistance they required in the courses of study open to them.[1]

How extensive those studies were may be to some extent gathered from a list of the books and treatises

[1] See a more detailed account of Benedict Biscop in Chap. VI.

which Bede himself wrote. The list[1] is appended by Bede to the Fifth Book of his Ecclesiastical History, and is prefaced by an autobiographical account of the writer, containing, unfortunately, only eighteen or twenty lines. It is concluded by a short sentence of prayerful hope that the Lord Jesus, who had graciously allowed him to partake of the words of wisdom and knowledge, would some time or other take him to the fountain of all knowledge, where he might always appear before His face.

At the age of nineteen, six years before the then canonical age, Bede was ordained Deacon. At the age of thirty he was ordained Priest. At the age of fifty-nine he died. In a few brief words he gives a summary account of his life and labours. "I spent all my years in that monastery, ever intent upon the study of the Scriptures. In the intervals between the duties enjoined by the disciplinary rule and the daily care of chanting in the church, I took sweet pleasure in always learning, teaching, or writing." The Bishop who ordained him was John, Bishop of Hexham; for we are dealing with times before the foundation of the grand old bishopric of Durham. This John is better known as John of Beverley, a pupil of the learned and wise Archbishop Theodore, and it may well be that Bede owed to him much of his learning, especially in the Greek tongue. For Theodore, who was a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, had introduced the knowledge of Greek into England, and fostered it so carefully, that in Bede's time there were many who

[1] See page 17.

spoke Greek with as much ease as English. The art of chanting Bede learned from a famous adept, John, the Archchanter of St. Peter's at Rome, whom Pope Agatho lent for a year to Benedict Biscop. We are told that multitudes of people from the country round came to Wearmouth to hear John sing.

It is said that Bede declined the office of abbat, not wishing to deprive himself of leisure for study. A glance at the business and necessary occupations of the inmates of a monastery, as gathered from Bede's writings, will show that even without the onerous duties of the abbat, external and domestic, the ordinary priest-monk could not have had very much leisure. The brothers occupied themselves in threshing and winnowing their corn; in giving milk to the lambs and calves; in baking, gardening, cooking, and other parts of the less menial work of a large establishment. A considerable part of the day was spent in the observances enjoined by the Rule under which the regular monks lived. The priestly office gave continual work. "The mass-priest must have his missal, his singing-book, his reading-book, his psalter, his manual, his penitential, his numeral. He must have his officiating garments, and must sing from sunrise, with the nine intervals and the nine readings." So said an Anglo-Saxon law in later times, and to this considerable amount of work no doubt Bede refers when he speaks of his daily care of chanting in the church. Add to this the preparation and delivery of frequent sermons. When all these duties had been scrupulously performed, then, and only

then, had Bede leisure for his reading and teaching, and for the voluminous works which proceeded from his pen. Even in these present times, with all their facilities for literary labour, few lives of fifty-nine years can render so good an account of themselves.

We may reject as undoubtedly erroneous the statement that Bede visited Rome,[1] and as a fable the story that he was a Professor in the University of Cambridge, one of the least improbable parts of the story being that the date assigned to his Professorship makes him nine years old at the time.[2] There is no trustworthy record of any prolonged absence from his monastery. In a letter to a fellow priest on the subject of the vernal equinox, he alludes to a charming visit he had paid to his correspondent. In the same incidental way we learn that he had stayed with the Archbishop of York. And in a

[1] Some of the monks from Jarrow visited Rome in 701, a year before Bede was priested. It is probable that Pope Sergius may have invited Bede to visit Rome.

[2] His house was shown between St. John's College and the Round Church (Fuller)! Bede had an excellent opportunity fo making mention of Cambridge if he had wished or had been able to do so. In describing the search of the monks of Ely for a piece of stone large enough to make a coffin for their royal abbess Etheldreda, he says that they came by ship to a small deserted town, not far from Ely, called in the language of the English Grantacestir, near the walls of which they found a white marble coffin made ready. Since they must have passed Cambridge, Bede would have named that place if he had been familiar with it; and if Cambridge was meant by Grantchester, he would not, under those circumstances, have described it as a small deserted town.

sermon to which reference has already been made, he reminds his monastic audience of the experience they all had on their occasional visits to the world outside, how every one welcomed them and was eager to house and feed them.

If we have little or no detailed information as to the facts of Bede's life, we have at least a full account of his death, written by an eye-witness. And the account is so touchingly written, it shows us so kind a master, so loving a friend, so true a Christian, that we may well wish we had some account of his life from the same hand. From the very slight medical details which are given, we gather that his death was due to his sedentary occupations, and to the stooping attitude so constantly maintained by one who wrote many books in those days of slow writing. About a fortnight before Easter in the year in which he died, he was greatly troubled with shortness of breath, but mercifully without much pain. He lingered for some weeks, and died on Ascension Day, which in that year fell on May 26. Thus the year is known to have been 735.[1] Throughout the whole of this time, he

[1] The year 735 may be called the probable year of Bede's death, but the date is much disputed. He died on Wednesday, the eve of Ascension Day, and he died rather late in the evening, for we have the account of a good deal which happened after three o'clock on Wednesday afternoon. Ascension Day was held to commence at vespers on the preceding day, and thus Bede lived till Ascension Day according to the Church's reckoning, and yet died on Wednesday according to civil reckoning. The writer of the touching account of Bede's death says clearly and formally that Bede lived "up to the day

gave thanks to God every hour, day and night, cheerful and alway rejoicing. He daily read lessons to

of the Lord's Ascension, that is, the seventh of the calends of June." The seventh of the calends of June is May 26, and thus Ascension Day was May 26. This was the case in 735 A.D., so that the year 735 fulfils the necessary conditions.

But the matter is not so simple as it seems when thus stated. In one part of the account of Bede's death, Wednesday is named as the civil day on which the death-stroke came, while in another part of the account the formal statement is made that he lived till Ascension Day, May 26; and since Ascension Day was held by the Church to commence at vespers on Wednesday, it may be that Wednesday was May 26. But there can be little doubt that when a writer of those or any times states that Ascension Day was May 26, he must be taken to mean that the daylight part of Ascension Day, and not the twilight and night portion with which it began ecclesiastically, fell on May 26. It is distinctly stated in a letter sent by the Abbat of Jarrow in Bede's time, and probably composed by Bede himself, that the vigil of a feast on the 14th day of the moon is a part of the 13th, not of the 14th day. Wilfrid took the same ground at Whitby (p. 56). If Bede lived to Ascension Day, May 26, in the natural sense of the words either in their English or their Latin dress, Ascension Day was not May 27, and he died in 735 A.D.

Supposing that the other interpretation is right, Ascension Day would be May 27, to use those words in the natural sense, which must in that case be rejected so far as the statement that "Ascension Day was May 26" is concerned. Ascension Day was not May 27 till 751 A.D., which is much too late for Bede's death. This would end the controversy, if it were not that the early manuscript at St. Gallen has "the seventh of the ides of May" in place of "the seventh of the calends of June." It is the only manuscript with this reading, but it is the earliest manuscript we have of the letter, being probably of the eighth century, and thus three centuries earlier than any mention of May 26 as the death day. The date thus given,

his disciples, and whatever remained of the day he spent in singing psalms. If a short sleep interrupted these exercises, he no sooner awoke than he gave thanks to God with uplifted hands. "I declare with truth," the faithful Cuthbert exclaims, "I have never

May 9, suits no year between 720 and 799. But—and here is a justification of the ingenious argument mentioned above—May 9 was the day before Ascension Day in 742, and since that is a not very unlikely year for Bede's death, it has recently been suggested as the correct date (see the notes on Bede by Professors Mayor and Lumby, Pitt Press Series, p. 401.)

Bede's Ecclesiastical History ends with the year 731. But in the Moore MS. in the University of Cambridge, which is the best and earliest MS. of the History, and of a date contemporary with Bede, there is appended in the same hand a chronological summary for the years 732, 733, 734, which may well have been added by Bede himself. The last line, which is also the last line of a page, is more crowded with words than the ordinary lines of the MS. are, showing that the scribe knew that the whole work came finally to an end there. These facts strongly suggest that 734 was Bede's last full year of work. The anonymous author who continued Bede's chronology in a skeleton form to the year 766, and may therefore have lived about that date, has an entry under the year 735,—"Bede the Presbyter died." It may be noticed further that in Bede's letter to Archbishop Egbert he stated that he wrote because he was too ill to go to York and visit the Archbishop; and the date of his letter must have been 735, or very near it, for Bede speaks of the thirty years which had elapsed since King Alfrid's death in 705. This illness may not improbably have been that to which Bede succumbed.

It may be added that the list of Bede's writings, which he appended to the Ecclesiastical History, is carried to his fifty-ninth year only, and we have no continuation of the list for the ten years to A.D. 742. After the Epistle to Egbert (A.D. 735) we have no known writing of his.

seen with my eyes, nor heard with my ears, any one so lovingly earnest in giving thanks to the living God."

He chose a remarkable sentence to chant—remarkable for one whose whole bearing was that of confident hope—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." But it was rather for his pupils' sake that he chose it, for, using it as a text, he urged them to think of their last hour. He also sang some English verses on the same subject, in the Northumbrian dialect, of which the following represents the sense and metre:—

"As to the journey
Each must take,
No one is prudent
More than he should be
In considering
Ere he goes hence
What to his spirit,
Of good or of evil,
After the death-day
Doomed may be."

On one occasion he sang the antiphon, "O King of Glory, Lord of all Power, who didst on this day ascend in triumph above all the Heavens, leave us not desolate, but send to us the promise of the Father, the Spirit of Truth; Alleluia." At the words, "Leave us not desolate," he burst into tears, and wept for a long time. Then his pupils and he read together. "By turns we read," Cuthbert tells, "and by turns we wept; nay, we wept always while we read. In such joy we passed the days of Lent." He often repeated the words, "God scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Besides the lessons to his pupils, and the singing of psalms, he translated

into English, during these weeks of prostration, the Gospel of St. John as far as ch. vi. 9, and also some extracts from Bishop Isidore.

On the Tuesday before Ascension Day he was decidedly worse: a swelling appeared in his feet. Nevertheless he continued to dictate cheerfully, begging his scribe to write quickly, for he did not know how long he might last, or when it might please his Maker to take him. That night he lay awake, giving thanks alway. The next morning he urged the brethren to finish writing what they had begun, and when that was done, at nine o'clock, they walked in procession with the relics of the Saints—the origin of our "perambulation day,"—according to the custom of the time. One stayed with him while the others were thus engaged, and after a time reminded him that there was still a chapter to finish,—would it weary him to be consulted about it? "Get out your pen and ink," was Bede's reply, "and write fast, it is no trouble to me." So time went on till three in the afternoon. Then the gentle spirit bethought him that he had some things he would like to give to his friends before he died. He bade Cuthbert run quickly and fetch his fellow-priests, that he might distribute the little gifts with which God had endowed him. What a simple picture of the riches of a faithful monk the list presents! "I have in my chest pepper, napkins, and incense." No gold and silver had he to give, he told them, but with all love and joy he gave them what God had given him. Then he told them that they would see his face no more, and begged

them to say masses and prayers for him. They wept; but he turned their weeping into joy by telling them it was time he returned to Him who made him. He had lived long; the time of his departure was at hand; he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ.

Then came the final scene. In the evening his boy-scribe said to him, "One sentence, dear master, is left unfinished." He bade him write quickly. Soon the boy announced that it was finished. "True," the dying man said, "it is finished. Take mine head between thy hands and raise me. Full fain would I sit with my face to my holy oratory, where I was ever wont to pray, that sitting so I may call on my Father." And so he sat on the floor of his cell, and chanted "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost." And as he breathed the words "the Holy Ghost," he died.

APPENDIX A.

THE following are the books which make up the long list of Bede's writings, with such remarks as Bede himself adds. With trifling exceptions, they are all in existence still :—

On the early part of Genesis, three books.

On the Tabernacle and its Vessels, and on the Priests' Vestments, three books.

On the first part of Samuel,[1] that is, to the death of Saul, three books.

[1] This description is in accordance with the arrangement of the Hebrew text; the Septuagint and the Vulgate call the books of Samuel the First and Second Books of Kings. A little lower down in the list of Bede's works, we find mention of thirty questions on the Book of Kings; here the

On the building of the Temple, an allegorical exposition, two books.

On the book of Kings, a book of thirty questions.

On the Proverbs of Solomon, three books.

On the Song of Solomon, seven books.

Excerpts from St. Jerome on Isaiah, Daniel, part of Jeremiah, and the Twelve Prophets.

On Ezra and Nehemiah, three books.

On Habakkuk.

On the book of the blessed father Tobit, an allegorical exposition, concerning Christ and the Church.

Heads of lections on the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges.

On the books of Kings and Chronicles.

On the book of the blessed father Job.

On the Parables (Proverbs), Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

On Isaiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

On the gospel of Mark, four books.

On the gospel of Luke, six books.

Two books of Homilies on the Gospel.

"On the Apostle" (*i.e.* St. Paul), "I have carefully transcribed in order all that I have found in St. Augustine's works."

On the Acts of the Apostles, two books.

On each of the seven Catholic Epistles, a book.

On the Revelation of St. John.

four books of Samuel and Kings are meant; Nothelm, who asked the thirty questions, having described the four books as the Book of Kings, and Bede following him. In the treatise on Habakkuk, mentioned lower down, Bede used an older version than the Vulgate, perhaps because the "very dear sister in Christ," at whose request he wrote the treatise, used the older version. It seems probable that Bede used one or other version according to the circumstances of each case with which he dealt, as a modern writer uses the Psalter or the Authorized Version in quoting the Psalms, according as he prefers the ease of the one or the accuracy of the other.

Heads of lections on all the New Testament, except the Gospel.

A book of letters to various persons; one on the Six Ages of the World; another on the halting places of the children of Israel; another on Isaiah's words, "After many days shall they be visited"; another on the reason for Leap-year; and another on the Equinox, according to Anatolius.

The book of the Life and Passion of St. Felix, Confessor, translated into prose from Paulinus's metrical life.

"The book of the Life and Passion of St. Anastasius, which was ill translated from the Greek, and worse amended by some unskilled person, I have amended as to the sense."

The Life of the holy father, monk, and bishop, Cuthbert. In heroic verse and also in prose.

The history of the three Abbats of Jarrow, Benedict, Ceolfrid, and Huetbert, two books.

The Ecclesiastical History of England, five books.

A martyrology of the birthdays of the holy martyrs, "in which I have carefully noted all the martyrs I could find, not only on what day they overcame the world, but also in what manner of conflict and under what judge."

A book of Hymns, in various metres.

A book of Epigrams, in heroic metre.

On the Nature of things and on Times, a book on each.

On Times, a larger book.

A book on Orthography, alphabetically arranged.

A book on the Art of Metre; a small book on Tropes, *i.e.* on the figures and methods of speech in which Holy Scripture is written.

Some treatises not mentioned in this list are included among Bede's works. Such are his letters to Herefrid "On Thunder," his Penitential, and a short

tract on Phlebotomy, full of the curious superstitions prevalent down to recent times, as to good and bad stages of the moon for bleeding.

It is evident that the description of Bede given by a well-known writer on the Anglo-Saxons is not an exaggeration: "He was a phenomenon it is easier to praise than to parallel"; "his works were a kind of cyclopædia of almost all that was then known."

APPENDIX B.

THE TITLE "VENERABLE."

THE epithet "Venerable," so constantly applied to Bede, is found, both in his own writings and elsewhere, applied to men of holy life who had not been canonized. Bede frequently calls the founder of Wearmouth and Jarrow "the Venerable Benedict." He is not himself called Venerable in any extant work of a date earlier than the middle of the tenth century. The annalist who continued his Ecclesiastical History for thirty years after his death, calls him Presbyter Beda in making the entry of his death. He is most often called Dominus Beda in early manuscripts of his Homilies, 'Sir' being afterwards the title of the priest who had no University degree down to the Reformation, and in some districts considerably later than the Reformation.[1] Writers nearly contemporaneous with him call him Sanctus Beda, Saint Bede, or Holy Bede, and we find Bede himself applying that term to Abbat Benedict Biscop. Other writers of very early date call him Sacerdos

[1] The Zuinglian clergy in the Engadine are called "Ser" when addressed in the Romauntsch language.

Beda, Priest Bede, and Doctor Eximius, the Illustrious Doctor. The title Venerable, as used by Bede himself, did not imply an advanced age, for he writes of the Venerable Easterwine, and Abbat Easterwine died at the age of thirty-six. Thus the epithet as applied to Bede was of comparatively late origin, and had no more personal meaning than the epithets 'judicious,' 'admirable,' applied to Hooker and Crichton. In the middle ages such titles displaced the actual names of writers of distinction, and 'the Angelic Doctor,' 'the Seraphic Doctor,' were quoted under those names alone.

Marvellous accounts have been given of the origin of the title Venerable, as applied to Bede. They are scarcely worth repeating, except as showing to what credulity the inventors of wonders were able to appeal. One of these stories assumes that Bede visited Rome. When he was there, he saw on an iron gate the letters PPP. SSS. RRR. FFF. A Roman who observed him standing at the gate examining these letters, called out to him, "What are you looking at, English bull?" Bede's reply was, "I am looking at what you should be ashamed of," and he read off four Latin lines, the words of which commenced with the twelve letters on the gate. The Romans were so much struck by Bede's readiness and ability that they saluted him as Venerable, a title which the Senate afterwards confirmed!

Another story makes Bede become blind before his death. The boy who led him attempted to play a practical joke upon him. He guided him to a stony place, and told him that a number of people were there, anxious to hear him preach. Bede accordingly addressed a homily to the stones, and at the end of his discourse the stones cried out, "Amen, Venerable Bede." Another version of this story makes Bede end his sermon with the words,

"Which may God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost vouchsafe to grant us" : on which Angels were heard to say, "Amen, Venerable Bede."

A third story relates that one of Bede's disciples was engaged in writing an epitaph on his master, when he stuck fast for a word. He got as far as Hac sunt in fossa Bedæ . . . . ossa, "in this tomb are the bones of . . . Bede," and could get no further. He went to bed to sleep upon the difficulty, and next morning he found the gap filled by the word Venerabilis, written no doubt by the hand of an angel, according to the superstition of the time.

Bede's description of himself would seem to be "Beda presbyter," for in his Life of St. Cuthbert he mentions a person whom he describes as "major Beda presbyter," "the greater Bede the presbyter," as if counting himself as the lesser Bede the presbyter. There were two or three ecclesiastics in later times called Bede, a fact which may account for some of the impossible stories related of the Venerable Bede; such as the story of his being the teacher of Alcuin. The supposed connection with Alcuin depends upon a double coincidence of names. The Venerable Bede had a contemporary called Albinus (a name by which Alcuin was known), and in Charlemagne's time the famous Alcuin had a contemporary called Bede. To this it may be added, that Alcuin was an Englishman, famous for his learning, a student and master of the Cathedral School of York, and that in his time he wrote a letter to the monks of Jarrow, praising their predecessor Bede as a student and a writer, and urging them to imitate his good example.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONVERSION OF NORTHUMBRIA.

THE kingdom of Northumbria, the birthplace and home of the Venerable Bede, consisted of two parts. Each was an independent kingdom, though the two were usually under the rule of one king. Sometimes this king was sole ruler over both countries; at other times he reigned in his own portion of the land, and allowed a less powerful king to reign as his inferior in the other portion. At the time when Christianity was first brought to the Angles or English of Northumbria, Edwin was sole king of the country. The province of Deira, that is, roughly speaking, Yorkshire and Durham, was his by descent. The other province, Bernicia, which occupied the remainder of the North-East of England on that side of the Humber, and part of Scotland as far as the Forth, he held by conquest, having expelled the rightful king.

The first impulse towards the establishment of Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons—to use a name which is generally understood, though it may not be accurately correct—was given by the sight of some young natives of the province of Deira exposed for sale in the slave-market at Rome. The story is well known, but it will bear repetition, and it belongs to

our subject. Gregory, once the Prefect of Rome and afterwards its Bishop, was struck by the handsome faces and fine forms of the Yorkshire lads. He asked of what race they were. He was told that they were Angles. Being inveterately addicted to playing upon words, he replied that they were fit to be made Angels. From what province did they come? From Deira. Then they must be freed *de irâ*—from the wrath—of God. Who was their king? Ælla. Then they must be taught to sing Alleluia. Gregory set to work with characteristic energy. He bought some young English slaves, and began to train them in the doctrines and practice of Christianity, intending to send them in the course of time to preach to their fellow-countrymen. But as this seemed to his enthusiasm a slow process, he attempted to visit England himself; and when that intention was frustrated, he sent Augustine and his party, in the year 595. Although the natives of Deira were the objects of Gregory's first interest, the Italian mission went to Kent, and christianized that kingdom; and it was not till many years after that any attempt was made to preach the Gospel in Deira. King Edwin of Northumbria gave the opportunity for which it is to be supposed that the Italians in Canterbury had been waiting through nearly thirty years.

In the year of our Lord 625, Edwin wished to marry Ethelburga, otherwise called Tate, the sister of Eadbald, king of Kent. She was a daughter of Ethelbert, the first Christian king. Her brother was willing that she should marry the king of Northumbria, but

he was not willing that she should marry a pagan. Edwin gave such assurances respecting religious matters as overcame Eadbald's scruples. He promised that he would show no hostility to the new religion; nay, he would give full permission to Ethelburga to practise the rites of her faith, not only for herself, but for all who came with her, men and women, priests and attendants. And he added that if the new religion proved on careful examination to be more worthy of God than that which he professed, he was far from saying that he would not adopt it.

Both the king of Kent and his advisers in ecclesiastical matters must have been forcibly reminded by this answer of what had occurred in their own land in the preceding generation. On very similar conditions, King Ethelbert had married Bertha, a daughter of Charibert, king of the Franks, a Christian. He had allowed her the use of an old Roman-British church which remained near Canterbury, and may be said still to remain,—St. Martin's. He had also allowed her to bring with her a bishop, Liudhard. Thus, when Augustine landed on the Isle of Thanet, he found in Kent a pagan king with a Christian wife, and no doubt Queen Bertha was an important element in the conversion of the king and kingdom. "The unbelieving husband shall be saved by the believing wife." With this example before them, the authorities of Kent had good reason for trusting their princess to the Northumbrian king. His conversion would probably be only a matter of time.

The Archbishop of Canterbury at this time was

Justus. He had been a companion and suffragan of Augustine himself, who died twenty years before the events of which we are speaking. He selected the most suitable man he could find as adviser for the princess. This was Paulinus, whom he consecrated bishop on July 21, 625 A.D. The personal staff of the princess being thus completed, she went northwards, and was married at once to King Edwin.

On Easter Day, 626, the king was residing on the banks of the Derwent, in his original kingdom of Deira. The king of the West Saxons sent an assassin with a poisoned dagger to kill him. Edwin was only saved by the interposition first of his chief and favourite minister, Lulla, and then of a faithful soldier, Forthere, both of whom were slain by the assassin's dagger. The same night a daughter was born to him, the first-fruits of his marriage with Ethelburga. Paulinus declared that Christian prayers had obtained a safe and easy deliverance for the queen from the great pain and peril of childbirth. In gratitude for this and for his own deliverance, Edwin gave the infant to Paulinus to be made a Christian of, and on the following Whitsunday she and twelve others of the king's connections were baptized. Edwin also promised that if he should succeed in his war against the king of Wessex, he would cast off his idols and serve Christ.

The hoped-for success came, and the king returned to fulfil his promise. He at once abandoned the worship of idols, but he hesitated long before he would receive the sacraments of the Christian faith.

He went through a course of careful instruction by Paulinus, and he then conferred with the wisest of his own advisers. Bede describes him as a man of the utmost sagacity, a character which the facts recorded of him completely justify. He sat often and long alone, debating with himself in silence whether he should take the great step.

At this crisis a letter reached him from Pope Boniface. The Pope urged him to become a Christian, and sent him the blessing of his protector Peter, a shirt with golden embroidery, and a garment of Ancyra. The letter, which Bede has preserved, is a powerful one, stating the case against idols in a vigorous manner. Boniface wrote at the same time to Ethelburga, pressing her to be instant with the king, in season and out of season. Though a celibate himself, the Pope showed a full appreciation of the power of the weapon he thus brought to bear upon the king. And he showed some discrimination in the presents he sent to the queen. In addition to the blessing of Peter, he sent her a silver mirror, and an ivory comb inlaid with gold.

Still the king held out; not, as it would seem, from any spirit of obstinacy, but because he wished to be sure about what he was doing. Such a convert is worth waiting for. Paulinus got a little tired of waiting, and determined to make a startling appeal to the king's superstition. Bede says that we may suppose the knowledge which enabled him to make this appeal to have been conveyed in a vision. Another explanation will occur to the reader.

Some years before this time, Edwin had been in exile at the court of Redwald of East Anglia. Messengers arrived from the king who had exiled him, demanding that he should be given up. As Edwin sat alone one stormy night, awaiting in the utmost anxiety the decision of Redwald and his ministers, a stranger came to him, a man with a strange face, clad in a strange garb. He asked Edwin what he would do for one who could promise him safety for the present, the throne of his kingdom in the future, and, beyond the future, such salvation as neither he nor his fathers had dreamed of. Edwin was full of promises. He would do anything such a man told him to do. The stranger then pressed his hand on his head, and said, "When this sign comes to thee, remember thy promises and perform them."

Years rolled on. To Edwin, freed long ago from his fears at Redwald's court, king now of Deira and Bernicia both, sitting as we left him in constant thought and doubt, Paulinus one day came. He pressed his hand on the king's head. "Knowest thou that sign?"—Edwin fell at his feet; declared that he must and would become a Christian; begged only for a little time, that he might if possible bring over the great men of the kingdom with him. To this Paulinus consented, and a great council was held. Bede's account of it makes us long for a fuller report.

The king asked each magnate in turn what he thought of the new doctrines and the new worship. The chief priest, Coifi, was the first to answer.

Coifi may be taken as the type of a cunning priest without convictions, one who serves at the altar that the altar may serve him. "He was anxious that the new doctrines should be made clearly known to them, for he had come to the conclusion that there was no reality in that which he had so far professed. No one had been more diligent than he in the worship of the gods, and yet many had more of the king's favour, more of worldly prosperity, than he with all his care for the gods. Had those same gods been good for anything at all, they would, of course, have insured his promotion to a position of pre-eminence. If the king liked the new religion better, after looking into it, by all means let it be adopted." It is only fair to say that Coifi appeared in a much more favourable light in a second speech and in eventual action.

The next speaker was a man of very different mould. It would be well if in all councils in this land there were men with thoughts so just and expressions so happy. He is a type of the thinking layman. "What came before life, and what comes after, all is mystery. The life of each man, that is all that each man knows." An apt simile occurred to him, beautiful in its simplicity. It may well have been that he drew it at the moment of speaking from an actual event; for we have been told that long time had elapsed since July, 626, and the king and magnates were baptized at Easter, 627, so that the council was held in winter. This was the simile. "The king and his chief captains and ministers are

sitting in council on a dark winter's day; rain and snow without; within, a bright fire in their midst. Suddenly a little bird flies in, a sparrow, in at one door and then out at another. Where it came from none can say, nor whither it has gone. So is the life of man. Clear enough itself, but before it, and after the end thereof, darkness; it may be, storm. If the new doctrine will tell us anything of these mysteries, the before and the after, it is the religion that is wanted." Others supported this view.

Then Coifi became more worthy of himself. He begged that Paulinus might be heard. Paulinus was heard, and was listened to attentively. There were few such orators as he, who could convert a township in a sermon. And nature had given him a form fit for an orator. A certain abbat of Peartaneu,[1] a man of singular veracity, Deda by name, told Bede that he had talked with an aged man who was baptized by Paulinus in Trent stream, in the presence of King Edwin. The old man described the eloquent missionary bishop as tall of stature; stooping slightly; with black hair, thin face, nose slender and aquiline, aspect reverend and majestic. This was the man who was brought in to expound before the chief priest of the faith he had come to overthrow, the precepts and the promises of the faith he preached. And this was the result. "I have long known, O king, that there was nothing in our religion; for the more I sought for truth in it the less I found it. And

[1] Parteney, in Lincolnshire. This was a cell to Bardney.

here I freely confess that in this new preaching I find the truth which there I could not find. It gives us life, salvation, and happiness eternal. Let us make haste to abjure and to burn the altars we have consecrated to such poor purpose." All reason for further delay had now disappeared. The king's decision was made. He gave Paulinus licence to preach publicly. He made the announcement that he had himself abandoned idolatry, and that he accepted the faith of Christ. Then he asked Coifi who should set about the destruction of the idols. This was a more serious question for the king than for Coifi. The king had once believed, and he trembled. Coifi had not believed, and he did not tremble. "None so fit as I. I taught the people to worship them. I will destroy them." So he called for a spear and a stallion charger, forbidden things both for a pagan priest, and he galloped up Goodmanham[1] lane, and rode full tilt at the temple door. The people thought him mad; but he pierced the door with his spear, and called on those with him to finish the work of destruction. Then they burned the temple, with its idols and all that was contained within its precincts.

The king and his chiefs were baptized at York on Easter Day, April 12, 627, in the wooden church which Edwin built in honour of St. Peter. Though there had been a British bishop of York, this is the first church on record of the series which has reached

[1] Near Market Weighton in Yorkshire. Called in Bede's time Godmundingham.

its climax in the present glorious Minster. The king at once commenced a church of stone of larger dimensions, enclosing the original oratory, but before the church was finished he was killed in battle at Hethfeld,[1] by an army of Britons and pagan Mercians, A.D. 633. He was forty-seven years of age at the time of his death, and had reigned seventeen years.

So long as the king lived, that is, for six years, the work of conversion went on rapidly. Bede tells us of a visit of thirty-six days, paid by Paulinus to the king and queen at one of their country seats, during the whole of which time the bishop catechized and baptized. The people flocked from all the neighbouring villages and hamlets to hear him. As soon as they had heard him, they believed. As soon as they believed, he baptized them in the river Glen,[2] which ran by. This was in Bernicia. In Deira, we have records of his being often with the king at his seat at Catterick. There, in like manner, he catechized and baptized, the Swale being his laver of regeneration; for in the early infancy of the Church, Bede remarks, oratories and fonts could not be made. We may ask, why? It would seem that Paulinus, in his great power as a persuasive orator, forgot or neglected the less marked but more useful function of an organizer and establisher. Had Bede been able to say that after a time this severe personal work became less necessary on the part of Paulinus, because oratories and fonts were established, and here and

[1] Hatfield, in Yorkshire. [2] At Yeverin, in Glendale.

there, in an ever-increasing number of places, priests were found, each the centre of a body of true believers and acting as a missionary to the pagans around, we should not have had to record the apostasy of the land on the death of the king. It is related of Edwin, that wherever he found a good spring of water near a frequented road, he had a post fixed at the place with a brass dish chained to it for the use of travellers; and so strict was his administration of justice that the dishes remained uninjured. We can but regret that he did not establish in like manner supplies of the water of life for his subjects travelling to another world.

On the death of Edwin, Ceadwalla, king of the Britons, who still made head against the Northumbrian English from the mountain-fastnesses of the north-west to which they had retired, and Penda, king of the Mercians, proceeded to make a great slaughter of the Northumbrians, especially of those who were Christians. Ceadwalla's object was to destroy all the English, and though a Christian, he was not more likely to spare the Christian Northumbrians than was his pagan ally. For even in those early times of Christianity in this island, the *odium theologicum* raged, and there was hatred between the English, who were in communion with the Canterbury mission, and the Britons, who had refused to make terms with Augustine. It will be necessary to speak in more detail hereafter on this subject (*see* Chapter IV.). For the present, it is enough to say that the Christians of Northumbria were not likely to fare better with

their conqueror on the ground of his being a Christian too. The people abjured Christianity as lightly as many of them had taken it up. Paulinus fled before the storm and returned to Canterbury, taking with him Ethelburga and some of her children. He was made Bishop of Rochester, and there he remained till his death. Christianity almost entirely disappeared from Northumbria. Osric, Edwin's cousin, succeeded to the throne of Deira. He had been converted and baptized by Paulinus, but he went with the stream and abjured the faith. In Bernicia, the rightful heir, whom Edwin had deprived, became king. He had lived in exile among the Scottish Christians, and had been baptized by them; but he, too, abjured the faith when he came to the throne.

It is evident that Paulinus had made two mistakes. He had promised temporal rewards, prosperity and success against their enemies, to those whom he converted, and when a tide of misfortune set in, the hollowness of conversion on such terms was shown. And, as has been said, he had established nothing. He left no nucleus from which the light might shine forth again when the storm was past. A day's preaching converted hundreds: he baptized them and left them. A day's defeat swept them all away.

There is one bright spot in the dark picture. James the Deacon had been a companion of Augustine. He was the sweet singer of the party when they first arrived in Kent, when they made so great an impression on the king by the processional chant with which

they approached him. He had gone to the north with Paulinus, and he did not fly. He remained for some time in York, and then went to the neighbourhood of Catterick, where the village of Akeborough[1] took its name from him, as Bede informs us. Here he did what he could by teaching and baptizing, and he lived to see times of peace restored, when he taught to the new generation of Christians the Roman or Canterbury method of singing. He was the only sign of an establishment left by Paulinus. The condition of the Church in Northumbria was worse than that of a church which Paulinus had built in Lincoln, of which Bede tells—"Its walls stand in our time, but the roof is fallen in." Indeed the account given by Stephen Eddi, the biographer of Bishop Wilfrid, of the condition of the fabric of the metropolitan church of York, is as apt a commentary as could have been written upon the state of things which prevailed after the flight of Paulinus. When Wilfrid was made bishop, he found the church of the oratory[2] in ruins. The timbers of the roof were perishing, and did not keep out the weather; the windows were without protection, the rain pouring in and the birds of the air flying in and out; the walls were bare, and defiled with all manner of abominations.

[1] Jacob's (*i.e.* James's) town.

[2] The first York Minster was so called because King Edwin built it round the oratory at which he had been baptized.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND CONVERSION OF NORTHUMBRIA.

THE two apostate kings, Osric of Deira and Eanfrid of Bernicia, were both slain by Ceadwalla in the year following Edwin's death. This year was so full of misery to the Northumbrians, and the apostasy of the kings seemed so dreadful to the Christian historians who followed, that by common consent, as Bede informs us, the year was counted as part of the reign of Oswald, the next king, and Osric and Eanfrid were omitted from the list of kings. Oswald was the brother of Eanfrid, and was a very earnest Christian. He determined to attack Ceadwalla, in the year 635, and collected an army at a spot not far from Hexham and the Roman wall, called by the English Hefenfeld. When all was ready, he had a large wooden cross made and set up, supporting it with his own hands while the earth was being thrown into the hole in which it was fixed, and he and all his army knelt and prayed for success. Ceadwalla was routed and slain, and Oswald became king. Not unnaturally, the cross was endowed by the people with miraculous power. Bede tells us that in his time small chips of wood were cut from it and steeped in water, and the water thus hallowed cured both man and beast. Bede, it may be remarked in passing, was a firm

believer in miracles, on which point some information will be found in Chapter X. The monks of Hexham built a church on the spot after Oswald's death, with good reason, as Bede observes, for until Oswald set up that cross there had been no sign of the Christian faith set up in all Bernicia—no church, no cross, no altar. How severe is this unconscious criticism on Paulinus's want of method!

Oswald at once set about restoring Christianity among his subjects; but he neither sought for the return of Paulinus, nor applied to Canterbury for assistance. He had been brought up among the Scots, and to the friends and teachers of his exile he turned for assistance in his worthy object. They sent him a monk from Iona, a man whose disposition was not suited to the work. He returned, and reported at a council of the brethren of Iona, that he had not been able to do any good; the English were an uncivilized race, stubborn and barbarous. After some anxious debate had taken place as to what should be done, a gentle voice was heard. It was that of a young monk, Aidan by name, who wished to say something on the matter. The others gave audience while he spoke as follows to the unsuccessful missioner. "It seems to me, brother, that you were too hard with your ignorant hearers. The apostolic precept enjoins that we should give first the milk of easy doctrines, till such time as they are fit to receive deeper truths and perform higher duties." All present were struck with the idea that Aidan would be the right man to send, and happily for

Northumbria he was willing to go. He was consecrated bishop, and he selected Lindisfarne as his see. Bede does not explain why he did not choose York, which had been the see of Paulinus. It may have been because Paulinus was still living, at Rochester, where he died A. D. 644, so that there might, perhaps, be doubt as to the vacancy of the see; or, it may have been that Oswald and Aidan were anxious to have nothing to do with the Canterbury mission, and another Bishop of York would have reminded them too much of the former failure, and might have been of evil omen.

Aidan set about his work in a systematic manner. He at once obtained from the king a class of twelve English boys, to be trained for the priesthood. We trace the after-career of one only of these, but it is easy to imagine how much good the others may have done. This one was Eata, Abbat of Melrose, and eventually selected as Abbat and Bishop of Lindisfarne under circumstances which made that position one of peculiar difficulty. If his abbacy lasted ten years, he was still at Lindisfarne when Bede was born. He was a true disciple of Aidan, as Bede's character of him shows, "a man most reverend and most gentle." Aidan also spent much of the money which he received from wealthy persons in ransoming those who had been unjustly sold as slaves, and many of these ransomed slaves he taught and trained, ordaining them finally to the priesthood. By means of his Theological College, recruited in these and other ways, he supplied Northumbria with priests.

The circumstances of the time were, for some years at least, highly favourable to the spread of Christianity. Oswald was a successful sovereign. He united under his firm rule the four nationalities which his kingdom in its fullest extent contained,—English, Britons, Picts, and Scots; for the northern boundary of Northumbria was often pushed far into what we now call Scotland. He also effected a real union between Deira and Bernicia, till then too often at variance. Thus, wherever Aidan's emissaries went, they found peace. The king was as humble as he was successful. There is a pretty Easter story told of his unselfishness. One Easter Day he was sitting down to dinner. Royal dainties filled a silver dish before him. Aidan was his priest, and hands were already raised to bless the bread when the almoner came in, "the king's minister," as Bede describes him, "to whom the care of the poor had been assigned." He told the king that the streets were crowded with people begging bread. The king ordered the whole dinner to be taken out to them, and when they had eaten, he cut up the silver dish, and divided the pieces among them. Aidan was overjoyed on witnessing this pious act, and taking the king by the right hand exclaimed, "May this hand never decay!" And so it would seem it fell out; for when Oswald was slain in battle, his right hand and arm were cut off, and Bede himself saw them still fresh, enclosed in a silver case, at Bamborough.[1]

[1] The arm of Oswald came into the possession of the Abbey of Peterborough. King Stephen saw it there.

The king took an active part in helping on Aidan's work, applying himself industriously to build and extend the Church of Christ in his kingdom. Aidan had not learned to speak the English tongue with ease, while, on the other hand, the king, who had been brought up in Scotland, understood the bishop's Scottish language well. When Aidan preached, it was delightful, Bede reports, to see and hear the king interpreting to his captains and ministers the word of God from his mouth.

Oswald's mother was sister to the thoughtful and good King Edwin, and we may not unfairly add him to the long list of famous men who have owed to their mothers much more than their natural life.

The king was killed in a great battle at Maserfeld,[1] on August 5, 642, in the thirty-eighth year of his reign. He was slain by the same king who had killed Edwin, the pagan Penda, king of the Mercian English, who were still a pagan people. The spot where his body fell became the scene of many striking stories of miracles, some account of which will be given later. Bede attributes the wonder-working power of the place to the intercessions of Oswald in behalf of those who resorted to it in faith. He remarks, that it should be no matter of surprise that Oswald's prayers in the heavenly kingdom proved so efficacious, for while governing his temporal kingdom he was instant in prayer, and took

[1] There is a Merserfield near Winwick, in Lancashire. Oswestry, *sc.* Oswald's tree, has been suggested as the scene of the battle. Oswald's head was found in the same tomb with Bede's bones in 1104, at Durham.

more pains about the kingdom that is eternal. The reader is probably familiar with the conventional representation of an Anglo-Saxon king, sitting on the throne with his hands either pressed together or held apart, in either case pointed towards heaven. Oswald may have been the original of this representation, for so constantly was he praying or giving thanks to God, that whenever he sat he held his hands turned upwards on his knees. Though he died on the field of battle, he died in prayer, and this fact passed into a proverb. Unfortunately Bede leaves us only the Latin form, which has a certain proverbial rhythm, but is doubtless far inferior in character and spirit to the English original:—

God have mercy upon their souls!
Quoth Oswald as he fell to the ground.

When Oswald was slain, the old dual arrangement came into force again. His brother Oswy succeeded him, having as his partner in the kingdom King Oswin, a son of the apostate Osric. Oswin ruled in Deira, and was a happy contrast to his father. He was tall and of a graceful figure, courteous and agreeable in manner. He was liberal to all, high and low, and by his noble qualities of body and mind he won the love of all. Chief of his many charms was the grace of humility. There is a touching story of Aidan's conviction that he was too good to live, a story which gives us a valuable insight into the characters of the two men, and reflects great credit on the king. Oswin had given Aidan a very fine horse for any journey in which speed was necessary, and for assistance in crossing rivers;

for on ordinary occasions Aidan travelled on foot. One day Aidan met a beggar, who asked an alms. Having nothing else to give, he gave him the horse with its royal trappings. The king heard of this, and when next they met, he asked the bishop as they went in to dinner why he had given that horse, fit for a king, to a beggar. Were there not plenty of other horses in the king's possession, of less value or of different breed, any one of which he might have given to the beggar instead of the one which the king had specially selected for the bishop's own use? Surely, the bishop replied, the son of a mare was not more dear to the king than that son of God whose needs he had relieved! They went in to dinner, and the bishop sat down. But the king did not sit. He had just returned from hunting, and he stood before the fire warming himself, chafing, we may suppose, at the bishop's reckless almsgiving, and at the rebuke he had received. Suddenly his mood changed. He ungirt his sword and threw himself at the bishop's feet, entreating him to be reconciled. From that time forward, he penitently declared, he would never mention the matter again, nor would he ever again question any gift which the bishop might make to the sons of God from the king's possessions. Aidan was frightened by such humility. He sprang from his seat and raised the king, assuring him of complete reconciliation, and begging him to cast off his sadness and take his meal with cheerfulness. The king recovered his spirits, but the bishop grew more and more sad, till at last he burst into tears. His

attendant priest asked him in the Scottish language, which the king and his ministers did not understand, why he wept. "Because I feel sure he is not long for this life. So humble a king I never saw. This people is not worthy of such a king." And in all too short a time this presentiment was shown to be just. Oswy quarrelled with Oswin, and led an army against him. Oswin collected an army, but found he was not strong enough to face his brother king; so with characteristic resignation he disbanded his forces, and with one attendant, a trusty soldier, Tondhere, retired to the dwelling of a friend, Earl Hunwald. Hunwald betrayed him to Oswy, and the humble king and the faithful soldier were slain together at Ingethlinum, on August 20, 642. The monastery of Gilling, near Richmond, was built here soon after, that prayers might be offered for the king who was slain and for the king who slew him.

On the twelfth day after the murder of Oswin, Aidan followed the friend he had loved so well. He left behind him a most salutary example of self-denial and untiring labour. It was the highest commendation of his doctrine, Bede says, that he taught no otherwise than as he and his followers lived. Whenever he met any on his journeys, rich or poor, if they were heathen, he exhorted them to embrace the true faith; if Christians, he sought to strengthen them in the faith, and to quicken them to almsgiving and other good works. He and all his companions, whether shorn monks or laymen, spent the time which was not occupied in active work, in reading the Scriptures

and learning psalms.[1] If he was invited to eat with the king, he went with one clerk only, or two, and as soon as he had made a slight repast, he hastened to return to his reading or writing. In his time, many religious men and women were induced by his example to fast always till three o'clock on Wednesdays and Fridays, except during the fifty days following Easter. Bede's praise of him is unbounded, save only on the vexed question of the rule for the determination of Easter (*see* Chapter IV.). He summarizes the good bishop's character as follows: "Love of peace and charity; self-denial and humility; a mind superior to anger and avarice; despising pride and vain-glory; industrious in keeping and teaching the heavenly commandments; diligent in reading and in vigil; reproving the haughty and powerful with the authority becoming a priest, and as tender in comforting the afflicted." And even on the one subject on which men of Bede's views differed from men of Aidan's views, and differed with a hatred which even in these days it is not easy to imagine or comprehend, Bede wrote of him with a charity worthy of all imitation. "Although he observed not the true time of celebrating Easter, yet the object he had in view in all that he said, did, or preached, was the same as ours, that is, the redemption of mankind through the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Man Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and Man." Who could wish for a kindlier hand to write his epitaph!

[1] "So different," Bede says, "from the slothfulness of our times."

The details of Aidan's death afford a singular illustration of the primitive simplicity of his life. He was at one of the king's country houses when his end drew near. This was a favourite resort of his, for there was a church there, and he had also a sleeping-place, so that he could make it a centre for excursions through the neighbouring district. He did this also at other of the king's houses, having nothing of his own but a church and a few fields near it. When his companions saw how ill he was, they made a sort of tent for him, apparently a lean-to, attached to the west wall of the church. And here he died, leaning on a beam placed as a buttress for the support of the wall. Bede relates that when the village and church were burned some years later by Penda of Mercia, whose course of evil-doing seems unending as we read chapter after chapter of the history, the beam was not burned. The church was rebuilt, and the beam was restored to its place as a buttress, and again the church was burned and again the beam was not burned; yea, though the fire blazed through the holes by which it was fastened to the church, yet was not the beam burned. After this second preservation, the beam was stored as a relic in the renovated church, and Bede tells us that in his time it worked miracles. Aidan's church establishment in Northumbria proved as tenacious of existence as the buttress on which he died.

Aidan died only thirty years before the birth of Bede. It is therefore not improbable that the father and mother of Bede were pagans in their early youth.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTIANITY IN NORTHUMBRIA TO THE TIME OF BEDE.

Two years after Aidan's death, his work bore fruit far beyond the bounds of Northumbria. The pagan Penda of Mercia was still living, and he had made his son king of the Middle Angles. This son, Peada, was anxious to marry the daughter of Oswy of Northumbria. Oswy refused to give him Elfleda unless he promised to become a Christian. He heard the Christian preachers, and their arguments were supported by the friendly persuasions of his brother-in-law Alfrid, son of Oswy, who had married a daughter of Penda. He was so completely won over, that he declared he must become a Christian whether he obtained Elfleda or not. Accordingly he came with his earls and soldiers, and was baptized at a village near the Roman wall, by Finan, the successor of Aidan. He then returned to his own kingdom with four priests, one a Scot,[1] Diuma, the others English. The priests had great success among the Angles, and even among the Mercians; for to the honour of Penda, murderous old pagan as he was, it is recorded that

[1] Probably from Ireland. The Scots formerly dwelt in Ireland, a fact which causes some confusion in early history. "Scotland" was not so called till the tenth century.

he was quite willing to allow his son's preachers to come into Mercia, if any Mercians wanted to hear them. And we cannot but feel respect for him when we read that he heartily despised such professing Christians as he saw living evil lives,—" base wretches, not to do what the God they believe in tells them." One of the four priests mentioned above was Ceadda, or Chad, and he and his brethren were the direct means of converting to Christianity the Middle Angles, the Mercians, the East Saxons, and, to speak generally, the greater part of England, exclusive of Northumbria and Kent and the extreme south and south-west.

At length Penda was slain ; and as a sort of compensation for all the harm he had done to Northumbria and its Christianity through many long years, his death proved to be an important epoch in Christian progress in the kingdom. In the year 655, twenty years only before the birth of Bede, King Oswy had determined to put an end, if possible, to the continual harass caused by Penda's hostility. He had accordingly offered to Penda a large amount of property if he would let Northumbria alone. Penda refused the offer of a part of the land, and set himself to work to take the whole, and to extirpate the Northumbrian English. Oswy, when he heard of the refusal, exclaimed that he would offer his gifts to a king who would accept them, the Lord his God. He bound himself by a vow to give to God twelve farms for building monasteries, and to dedicate his infant daughter to perpetual virginity, if he proved

victorious against Penda. With much inferior forces he met the enemy of his house on the banks of the river Vinwed,[1] and there he slew Penda, and broke the strength of Mercia. This battle was fought on the 15th of November, much later in the year than the other battles of which we have spoken, and the flooded state of the river aided greatly in the destruction of the pagans. Oswy carried out his vow. He gave six portions of land in Deira and six in Bernicia, each containing ten families, according to the old English method of reckoning the extent of land. In these, as Bede says, war was to cease; monks were to engage in the warfare that is spiritual, and were to pray for the peace of the land. This foundation of monasteries on a large scale naturally gave a great impetus to the monastic movement. The little Elfleda was sent to her relative Hilda, at that time abbess of Heruteu, *i.e.* "the island of the stag," now known as Hartlepool. Two years later, Hilda obtained a possession of ten families on the Yorkshire coast, at Streoneshalch, where she founded the monastery afterwards so well known as the abbey of Whitby. Here Elfleda lived for sixty years. Only ten years or so before Oswy's vow, there was so great a dearth of monasteries in the land, that many who wished to enter the monastic life were obliged to go to the Franks or the Gauls.

It appears that Aidan had not built a church at Lindisfarne. Finan commenced one immediately

[1] Supposed by Camden to be the Aire, in Yorkshire. More probably the Went or Wynt, south of the Aire.

upon his succession to the bishopric, building it of hewn oak, and thatching it with reeds. A later bishop, Eadbert, took off the thatch, and covered the roof and walls with lead. In Finan's time the controversy about the true time of keeping Easter, already alluded to, began to assume considerable dimensions. The question in its full detail need not now be entered into, but some of its main features are easily intelligible, and must be stated here.

Easter Day commemorates the Resurrection of our Lord. That event is generally understood to have occurred on the third day from the Passover, *i.e.* from the 14th day of the month Nisan. The month Nisan commenced with the new moon of the vernal equinox, and thus the Passover fell on the day of the full moon, and the Resurrection Day on the third day after. Easter Day, however, does not represent that third day. In the earliest times of Christianity, the Paschal Feast combined the commemoration of the Passion and of the Resurrection, and its commencement—our Easter Day—coincided rather with the Passion than with the third day. The greater part of the early Christians said that the Feast must commence on the Lord's Day, and not on the 14th day of the moon if that was not a Lord's Day. Others persisted that the actual 14th day of the moon must be treated as the anniversary, whatever day of the week it might be. These latter were called Quartodecimans, from the Latin word meaning Fourteenth ; and as it happened that some of the early Quartodecimans held erroneous views on some points of doc-

trine, Quarto-decimanism became stamped as a heresy. The observance of the Sunday next after the actual day fixed by the change of the moon became the orthodox and Catholic custom.

But a more difficult question arose. Which of two new moons was to be taken as the new moon with which Nisan commenced? Taking the vernal equinox as the 21st of March, would a new moon falling on March 6 be the equinoctial moon, or must the next new moon be waited for, that on April 3? The latter was nearer to the 21st of March by one day, and some said that it was the true day of the equinoctial new moon. These asserted that March 8 was the earliest day for the new moon from which Easter Day was calculated. Others said that March 5, 6, or 7 would serve. Thus in a year when there was a new moon on March 6, the latter party held that the Sunday next after the full moon, *i.e.* next after March 20, was Easter Day. The others said that the new moon of April 4 must be waited for, and that Easter Day was the Sunday next after that full moon, *i.e.* next after April 18. These would be deep in their Lenten fast while the others were keeping the Easter feast. To take a particular case, in 417 A.D. there was a new moon on March 6. This was considered to be the Paschal moon in Rome. Fourteen days brought the full moon on March 20, a Tuesday, and five days more gave March 25 as Easter Sunday. Alexandria rejected the new moon on March 6, and waited till April 3, which gave them April 22 for Easter Sunday.

The present rule of the Christian Church makes

March 7 the limit for the Paschal new moon. The British Church, of which some account is given in Chapter V., was accused of being Quartodeciman. This was a calumny.[1] They kept Easter Day always on the Lord's-day, not on the week-day determined by the old rule for the determination of the Passover; but they did not agree with the Church of Rome in their rule for deciding which new moon to take as the basis of their calculations. The Britons said that theirs was the old rule, from which the Romans had departed. It was arranged at the Council of Nicæa, A.D. 325, that the Patriarch of Alexandria should obtain the assistance of Egyptian astronomers, and should announce to the Christian world each year what was the true day of Easter. The announcement was made in a formal letter to the Bishop of Rome, and a manuscript containing a most interesting series of these letters, written by Athanasius, was found between thirty and forty years ago by the late Archdeacon Tattam in the convent of St. Mary Deipara, in the desert of Nitria. The letters have been published, under the name of "The Festal Epistles of Athanasius." Some changes were made later, upon the details of which it is unnecessary to enter now, and the British Christians certainly had something to say for themselves when they argued that it was hard to charge them with error when they had kept to one rule throughout. It would seem that after the withdrawal of the Roman forces early in the fifth century,

[1] See the note on page 64.

the British Church was not kept informed of ecclesiastical changes outside.

It has been said above that the controversy on this subject assumed considerable dimensions in the time of Finan. Bede says that so long as Aidan lived the question was allowed to remain dormant, the universal respect in which he was held making every one unwilling to raise an objection to any part of his proceedings. "His time of keeping Easter was patiently tolerated by all men. They knew that he could not act in a manner contrary to the custom of those who sent him to Northumbria, and they saw that he industriously laboured to practise all works of faith, piety, and love." Here is a happy example of toleration. At the same time there is no evidence of any great amount of feeling against Aidan's practice. James the Deacon, the sweet singer, had maintained the Canterbury practice, which was that of Rome; but his influence could be but small compared with that of the king and of Aidan, both of whom were accustomed to the Scottish rule of Easter, which was the same as that of the British. During Finan's episcopacy, two or three circumstances combined to throw more weight into the Canterbury or Roman scale. A Scottish monk and saint, Ronan, who had been trained on the Continent, held a disputation with Finan, alleging that the Scots were at variance with the universal Church in their rule for keeping Easter. He made no impression upon Finan, who seems to have spoken his mind rather freely, "being of a hot and violent temper." But the disputation

called a good deal of attention to the subject. Queen Eanfleda, too, had seen the Canterbury rule observed in Kent, and she had with her a Kentish priest, Romanus, who followed that rule. Thus it fell out on one occasion, that when the king was enjoying the Easter feast, his enjoyment was spoiled by the absence of his consort's countenance, she and her damsels being still deep in the Lenten fast.[1] Then, in the year 661, yet another Scot succeeded Finan, Colman by name, and the controversy broke out with violence. Oswy kept the old Easter, but his son Alfrid, as well as the queen, kept the new. Alfrid had come under the influence of Wilfrid, a Northumbrian born, but trained at Lyons and an enthusiastic Romanizer; and, as Bede says, he rightly thought that Wilfrid's doctrine ought to be preferred to all the traditions of the Scots. Bede lets us have a peep behind the scenes which shows us the vigour of Alfrid's convictions. He tells us that Alfrid gave Wilfrid the monastery of Ripon, with land containing forty families. This he had a short time before given to those who followed the practice of the Scots; but, inasmuch as, "being left to their choice," they quitted the place rather than abandon their practice, he made it over to Wilfrid.

With such influences at work, the controversy soon came to a head. A synod was held at the monastery

[1] The queen was keeping Palm Sunday on the day which the king called Easter Day. This was therefore the day of full moon, for the British allowed that day as Easter Day, while the others said (as we do) that Easter Day is the Sunday not *on* but *next after* the full moon. The full moon was a Sunday in the year 651, and that date suits Bede's narrative.

of Streoneshalch, or the Bay of the Lighthouse, now Whitby. King Oswy presided. He himself followed the Scottish practice, but, as became a president, he held an independent course in the synod. His son Alfrid was there, a vigorous partisan of the Catholic custom, as its supporters called the Canterbury, *i.e.* the Roman, way. James the Deacon—the perennial James—is said by Bede to have been there, though it was now sixty-nine years since he sang his processional hymn in the isle of Thanet. He was on the Catholic side, of course; so was Romanus, the Kentish priest of Queen Eanfleda; so was Agilbert, bishop of Dorchester among the West Saxons, who was at the time paying a long visit to his friends Alfrid the prince and Wilfrid the Abbat of Ripon. Agilbert's priest Agatho was there on the same side, and Wilfrid. On the other side were Colman, bishop of Lindisfarne, with his Scottish clerks; the Abbess Hilda and her train; and the venerable bishop Chad, of whom we have spoken above. To the honour of every one, it is reported by the Catholic part that Chad was the interpreter for both sides,—a most vigilant interpreter, Bede assures us.

The king made a short opening speech. "They all expected the same kingdom of Heaven; they ought not to differ in the celebration of the mysteries of the kingdom. What they had to do was to inquire which was the true tradition. That once determined, all should follow it." Then he called on his Bishop, Colman, to speak. Colman "kept what he had received from his fathers. They in turn had received it by tradi-

tion from the blessed Evangelist St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved." He spoke at some length, but this was the pith of his discourse.

The king called on Agilbert. Whether as a happy device or as a matter of real necessity, Agilbert pleaded the want of sufficient familiarity with the English tongue. Might his disciple Wilfrid speak for him? The synod assented, and thus the keenest partisan of the Catholic way, the most powerful speaker in the assembly, was put in the forefront of the discussion, a place to which his own position could not have entitled him. Bede gives his speech, and the retorts of Colman and Wilfrid's replies, in a form which renders it probable that we have a report more or less verbatim.

Wilfrid informed his hearers that the Easter which the Catholic party observed was that which he had himself seen observed by all in Rome,—Rome where St. Peter and St. Paul lived, taught, suffered, and were buried. He had seen the same kept in Italy and France when he travelled through those countries. He found that in Africa, Asia, Egypt, Greece, in all parts of the world where there was a Church of Christ, the same Easter was kept by all nations and languages; except indeed, Colman and his complices the Picts and Britons, who in remote islands—and only in parts even of them—opposed the universe.

Here Colman broke in with a repetition of his argument. "Could he and his be thus accused of folly and obstinacy, when they did as did St. John, who laid his head on his Lord's bosom?"

Then Wilfrid proceeded to demolish Colman's argument. If Colman relied—he retorted—upon authority, for his statements respecting the methods of St. John and St. Peter, he must have access to sources of information which had since been closed to the student of the New Testament and of ecclesiastical history. Wilfrid asserted—and one assertion was as good as another—that St. John followed literally the Jewish rule, and, as a concession to Jewish converts, kept Easter on the day next but one after the day of Passover, whether week-day or not. As parallels to this proceeding, Wilfrid quoted St. Paul's circumcision of Timothy, his offerings in the Temple, his shaving his head with Aquila and Priscilla. But when St. Peter preached at Rome, Wilfrid continued, he taught men to wait till the Lord's-day between the fifteenth and the twenty-first day of the moon. Thus Colman followed neither the practice of St. John nor that of St. Peter; for he did not keep Easter on a week-day, and his Easter Day was the Lord's-day between the fourteenth and the twentieth day of the moon, so that the Easter feast actually began sometimes on the evening of the thirteenth day of the moon, which was certainly earlier than our Lord ate the Passover. Wilfrid further urged that by excluding the twenty-first day of the moon, the British contravened the Jewish Law. Thus the unfortunate men were shown to agree neither with St. John nor with St. Peter, neither with the Law nor with the Gospel.

Colman fell back upon authorities of a more recent

date. "Did the holy Anatolius, so much commended in Church history, act contrary to the Law and the Gospel in teaching that Easter was to be celebrated from the fourteenth to the twentieth? Did their most reverend Father Columba, and his successors, act contrary to the Law and the Gospel,—men whose holiness was attested by miracles and signs following?"

Wilfrid denied that they agreed with Anatolius, whose cycle of nineteen years[1] was unknown to the British or neglected by them. As for their Columba and his followers, of whom Colman asserted that their faithfulness was attested by miracles, he might answer in the words of the Scriptures, that there were many who would say in the day of judgment, "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many mighty works," to whom the Lord would reply, "I never knew you." We may suppose that murmurs were heard at this audacious and unseemly retort. At any rate, Wilfrid qualified what he had said, but after a fashion which resembled some retractions in a more modern assembly. "Far be it from him to say so of their fathers,"—not because they did not deserve it, but—"because it was more just to believe good than evil of persons one does not know." And then he spoke of the pious intentions with which no doubt in their rustic simplicity they loved God. But he had another blow in store for Colman and Columba. "What though that Columba of theirs—'nay, of ours, too, if he was a

[1] After nineteen years the sun and moon hold nearly the same relative position.

servant of Christ,' he interposed, mindful, perhaps, of former murmurs, but guarding himself against any positive recognition of any virtue in Columba—"what though that Columba of theirs was powerful in miracles and was a holy man, was he to be preferred to the most blessed prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, to whom the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of Heaven?"

The king had now made up his mind, if indeed it was only now that he had done so. He brought the discussion to an end. "Is it true, Colman, that our Lord gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom of Heaven?" "It is true, O king." "Can you show that any such power was given to your Columba?" "None," Colman answered. "Do you both agree that these words were principally addressed to St. Peter, and that the keys of Heaven were given to him by the Lord?" With unwonted oneness, Colman and Wilfrid replied, "We do."

Then the king delivered his opinion,[1] and the whole assembly ratified it, both those who sat and those who stood—a hint no doubt that there was a popular element in the synod. "I also say that he is the door-keeper. Him will I not contradict, lest when I come to the gates of the kingdom of Heaven there be none to open them, he who hath the keys being my enemy."

The result of the synod was that the great majority of the worsted party throughout the country went over with the king. Colman, however, went back to the

[1] Stephen Eddi says he delivered it with a smile. Wilfrid was his informant.

Scots, being determined not to abandon his traditional practice. There was also a further difficulty in the way of an agreement, for he and his had a form of tonsure different from that of the Italian party. The Britons, with the Easterns, tonsured the front of the head, in a crescent form. The Catholic party tonsured the top of the head, leaving a ring of hair to represent the crown of thorns. This they called the tonsure of St. Peter, and being in want of a bad name to call the other by, they called it the tonsure of Simon Magus. From the time of the synod of Whitby, however, these differences ceased in England, and Christians were one in practice as in faith.

Bede, who is writing of times only ten years before his own birth, takes occasion to remark upon the extreme frugality of the Scottish bishops who had ruled in Northumbria,—Aidan, Finan, and Colman. When Colman and his party left Lindisfarne, those who followed found no money, only cattle, and scarcely house-room enough for the party which had left. The king had never been accustomed to bring a large retinue with him when he came to perform his devotions in the church : he brought five or six companions at the outside, to spare the bishop expense, and if they accepted food, they were satisfied with the plain fare of the ecclesiastics. The result of so good an example of self-denial and frugality on the part of the bishop and his clergy was that the religious habit was held in great veneration. All persons joyfully received a monk, or any of the clergy, as God's servant. Those who met such ran to them, bowing, and begged to be

signed with the hand or blessed with the mouth. On Sundays the people flocked eagerly to church and monastery, to hear the word of God. If a priest came into a village, the inhabitants crowded round him to hear the word of life. In those days, Bede remarks, apparently with a sad glance to his own times, in those days the clergy had no other aim than to preach, to baptize, to visit the sick, to undertake the cure of souls.

Such is the description which Bede gives of the state of Christianity in Northumbria, a very few years before his birth. It remains only to record that even so late as this—and we have now come to the year 665—the East Saxons relapsed once more into paganism, believing that a pestilence which devastated their country was due to the wrath of the gods they had neglected and abjured. And the year after, Archbishop Theodore came to Canterbury, and with him the knowledge and teaching power which prepared the way for Bede and made such a phenomenon possible. The interval between Theodore's arrival and Bede's commencement of his career as a student and writer is covered by the life of St. Cuthbert, the details of which will be found in Chapter VII.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRITISH CHRISTIANS.

It is necessary to say a little of the British Christians, who have been mentioned in the account of the Synod of Whitby and elsewhere. School chronologies used to give A.D. 596 as the date of the "introduction of Christianity into this island by Augustine," but Christianity had been known and practised here very long before Augustine's time. There were British Christians, and in large numbers too, four hundred years before Augustine came to christianize the Saxons.

No one can say, with any approach to certainty, by whom Christianity was first brought to Britain. The connection between Rome and this island was so close in the latter years of St. Paul's life, that there is much reason to suppose that the new religion became known here very early, probably by some chance means. It has been said that St. Paul himself visited Britain, in the interval between the end of the Acts of the Apostles and his second captivity and death. More than a hundred and fifty years before Augustine's time, an ecclesiastical historian (Theodoret) asserted that St. Paul carried out during that interval his intention of visiting Spain,[1] and that he proceeded further to the islands scattered in the sea.

[1] Romans xv. 24, 28.

Clement of Rome, a contemporary of St. Paul, says that the Apostle went to the extreme limits of the West; and we may remember that a Roman poet described Britain as the "furthest island of the West." The great historian of the early church, Eusebius, writing about the year 320, says decidedly that some of the Apostles crossed the sea to the British Isles.

The information we derive from secular sources as to the means of communication between Britain and Rome renders it highly probable that some attempt would be made to christianize the island in Apostolic times. Britain was then governed by Roman viceroys, and was no doubt a frequent topic of conversation among the Prætorian soldiers with whom St. Paul lived for some time. The sons of British princes were sent to Rome, both as hostages for the good conduct of their fathers and for purposes of education. Seneca, the brother of the Gallio of the Acts, had large possessions in Britain. The poet Martial, who went to Rome about the year of St. Paul's death, sings the praises of a British matron Claudia Rufina, wife of Pudens, and asserts that his verses were sung in Britain. It is natural to identify Martial's British Pudens and Claudia, living in Rome, with St. Paul's Christian Pudens and Claudia, also living in Rome (2 Tim. iv. 21) at the very time when Martial went there.[1] On the face of

[1] Pomponia Græcina, whose husband commanded in Britain A.D. 43—52, was accused at Rome A.D. 57 of "foreign superstition," and this has been held to mean Christianity. Other links between early Britain and Christianity might be added.

it, the belief that Christianity was introduced into Britain from Rome through Gaul in the earliest years of the Christian Church is the reverse of unreasonable. But if any of the great apostolic missionaries had been concerned in its introduction, the British Christians must—one would suppose—have had some tradition to that effect.

The tradition that the Apostles divided the world among themselves by lot has no historical authority. According to that tradition, Britain fell to the lot of Simon Zelotes, who thereupon came to the island and introduced Christianity. A more persistent tradition, though of later origin, assigns Joseph of Arimathea as the founder of the Church here, adding that he was sent by Philip, who preached in the land of the Franks. Joseph and his eleven companions are said to have settled at Avalon, and the "Twelve Hides" of Glastonbury are said to represent the parcels of land which the then king gave to the twelve missionaries. The English bishops claimed for their Church precedence over some Churches at the Council of Basle (A.D. 1431) as having been founded by Joseph; and Queen Elizabeth and Archbishop Parker claimed the same origin for the Church.

Passing by these traditions and suppositions, it is certain that Tertullian (about A.D. 200) described the spread of Christianity in the island as so wide that parts which the Roman armies could not reach had been subdued to Christ, and that British bishops were present at the Council of Arles, held in the year 314. The Emperor Constantine the Great,

and also Athanasius, testified to the orthodoxy[1] of the British Church between A.D. 325 and A.D. 350. About three quarters of a century later, the great Pelagian heresy, respecting man's dependence on the grace of God, was commenced by a British Christian, Pelagius being the Greek equivalent for Morgan.

The departure of the Romans, who carried off the flower of the population in their armies, and the arrival of the Saxons, effected the ruin of the Britons, and all but obliterated the British Church. According to Bede's account—and we have no other account which contradicts it—the Britons eventually deserved their fate. They had found courage to drive off the northern enemies who had invaded them as soon as the Romans retired, though at first they had been so terrified as to allow the Picts and Scots to drag them off Severus's wall with hooks, and so make a way over that useless barrier. But when the invaders had been after a time sent out of the land again, the Britons became too prosperous. There was a remarkable plenty of the fruits of the earth, such as had never been known before, and the people waxed idle and wanton in consequence. Vice spread rapidly among them. Bede's traditions informed him that cruelty, the hatred of truth, and the love of lying, were rampant; so much so that any one who was a little more inclined to the truth than his neighbours was hated and destroyed as a "subverter of Britain." And this was not confined to the laity. The clergy

[1] Constantine named the Britons among the churches which were exemplary and orthodox in their time of keeping Easter.

indulged themselves in drunkenness, quarrelsomeness, and so on. At length a pestilence came upon them and slew the greater part of them, and then their northern enemies attacked them again, and they invited the Saxons to come to their aid. We know what that led to. Bede gives none of the details which we learn from other sources, and only tells in general terms of the cruelty of the Saxons. The priests were slain at the altar; prelates and people were destroyed with fire and the sword; many who had fled to the mountains were seized, and murdered in heaps; others were more successful, and contrived to find refuge in the mountainous parts on the west of the island, Cornwall, Wales, and Cumberland.[1] There they kept up the succession of bishops —indeed, the sees of St. David's, Lampeter, and St. Asaph's, were founded during this period of distress—and when Augustine came to christianize the Saxons, one of the most important questions he had to refer to Pope Gregory was, what was he to do with the British bishops? These were, no doubt, the bishops living in the nearer parts of Wales, including Hereford; for it was not until many years had passed that the successors of the Italian mission led by Augustine were brought into contact with the Scottish Christians, who directly or indirectly owed their faith to the British Church and still maintained the same practices as that Church.

[1] They formed practically three separate churches, those of Cornwall, Wales, and Cumbria.

It should have been quite possible for Augustine's mission and the British Church they found on their arrival to differ on some points of practice,[1] and yet to agree in the main and be friendly disposed. But unfortunately Augustine acted injudiciously in the matter of his dealings with them. He treated them, as we gather from the accounts of those who took his side, as inferiors, and as having failed in their duty towards the Saxon invaders, whom they had not attempted to convert from heathenism.[2] They should have been treated with great consideration by the Italians, as the survivors of an early and interesting Christian Church which the Saxons had ruined; while the argument that they had not converted the Saxons was not worth much, for they had been compelled to fly before the conquering invaders, who were not likely to listen to the teaching of despised fugitives.

And it was not true that the Britons had made no attempt to maintain their profession of Christianity among the Saxons. They had stood their ground manfully,—more manfully, indeed, than the Italian mission did when the time of like trial came. Bishop Theonas, probably of Lincoln, and Bishop Thadioc, of York, had fled from their sees only a very few years before Augustine's arrival.

Augustine had two interviews with the British

[1] The only points specified were the date of Easter in exceptional years and some detail—we do not know what—in the ceremony of Baptism.

[2] St. Patrick went from Roman Britain to convert Ireland, and it was a British bishop, Ninian, who converted the Southern Picts.

bishops, whom he met near the then frontiers of Wales, probably at a village on the Severn. The second interview was short and unsuccessful. The native bishops[1] had consulted an aged man as to the course they should pursue with regard to Augustine's overtures. He advised them, that if on their next visiting him he rose to meet them and greeted them kindly, they should come to terms with him. If, on the other hand, Augustine remained seated, they should at once leave him, and break off communication with him; for if he treated them haughtily while they were still independent, he could not be trusted to treat them properly if they became in any sense his suffragans. Augustine did remain seated, and his visitors took the advice they had received, and refused to make any agreement with him. They parted with high words, on Augustine's side at least, and one result was, that the Canterbury mission was viewed with jealousy and dislike by the British Christians. To so great a length was this carried, that in the time of Laurentius, Augustine's successor, a certain Scottish prelate, Dagan by name, passing through Canterbury, refused to eat in the same house with the Italian Christians.

Augustine and his party achieved but a very small part of the work they had been sent to do. The little kingdom of Kent, with its king at Canterbury and its sub-king at Rochester, was their only permanent conquest. They had, indeed, converted London, then

[1] The bishops had with them many very learned men, chiefly from the monastery of Bangor.

the capital of the East-Saxon kingdom, but their bishop of London fled from his see when a popular tumult was raised against him, and never returned. The cause of the tumult is worth mentioning, as an indication of the barbarous character of the times. Bishop Mellitus of London, afterwards of Canterbury, was in the act of administering the Holy Eucharist when the sons of the king came in from hunting, tired and hungry. They demanded some of the white bread and of the wine, but Mellitus refused, informing them that they must first be baptized. The king's sons in their anger raised the tumult before which Mellitus fled, and for forty-six years there was no bishop in London. In a similar manner Justus, the first Bishop of Rochester, fled before a popular tumult. And even Augustine's immediate successor, Laurentius, was on the eve of flight when a so-called miracle stopped him. When Ethelbert, the first Christian king of Kent, died, his son succeeded him, and in accordance with the ancient practice of his race, made arrangements to take as his wife the young widow of the late king his father. Laurentius protested against this, and the king was very angry with him. The anti-Christian party fanned the flame, and Laurentius determined to fly. The night before his flight he slept for safety in the church at Canterbury, and the next morning he appeared before the king in great bodily distress, having—so he said—been soundly scourged by St. Peter during the night. The king was so much impressed by this unheard-of punishment that he made friends with Laurentius,

perhaps fearing that his own turn would come next. Paulinus, as we have seen already, fled before an outburst of Saxon paganism. Thus the Italians learned, in one place after another, what it was to have to fly before the Saxons, as the British Christians had done.

In the Fourth Book of his Ecclesiastical History, Bede records a similar case of a Christian bishop abandoning his position, and flying to a safe place. King Egfrid of Northumbria led an army against his neighbours the Picts, contrary to the earnest advice of Cuthbert, and the Picts by a feigned flight drew him and his forces into the recesses of the hill country, and slew them there. Taking heart from this success, they recovered the lands which the English had taken from them in former times. The British, too, following their example, shook off the English yoke in the north-west. Thereupon the English Bishop Trumwine, who had been appointed bishop over the Picts and was settled at the monastery of Abercorn, fled with his companions and took refuge at Whitby, where he spent the rest of his life. Bede narrates this without any remark which suggests a criticism of Trumwine's conduct.

We may remark here that the scourging of Laurentius, and its effect upon the king, was reproduced afterwards in Northumbria. We have the story from Stephen Eddi, Wilfrid's companion and biographer, not from Bede, who wrote a little later. When Wilfrid was deposed and cast into prison, the queen took possession of his chrismary, which was well filled

with relics, and kept it in her room, or hung it in her carriage when she made a journey. After a time, the king and she in the course of a royal progress through the cities and castles and towns of the kingdom, came to the monastery of Coldingham, over which the late king's sister, Æbba, presided.[1] They rested there for a time, and during the night the queen was seized by a demon and soundly flogged, like Pilate's wife, Eddi says, so that she was found the next morning in a dying state. Æbba went to tell the king of the dreadful thing that had happened, and gave him her mind freely on the subject, as Eddi tells. He had deposed Wilfrid, had treated contemptuously the orders from Rome, and finally had shut up the holy bishop in prison: no wonder the queen was flogged. He must release the bishop; if he could not replace him in the bishopric, he must give him free leave to go where he would; and the queen must give him back the chrismary she had taken from his neck. The king hearkened to the abbess, Wilfrid was released, the relics were restored to him, the queen was healed and was flogged no more.

The British Church continued to exist in Wales for many centuries. While other British communities came to terms with the Italian party in the Anglo-Saxon Church after the synod of Whitby, A.D. 680, and agreed to abandon the traditional rule for the determination of Easter, and other details in which they were at variance with the usages intro-

[1] For the state of morals at Coldingham under its royal abbess, see p. 182.

duced by the Italian mission, the bishops in Wales still held themselves independent of the See of Canterbury down to the commencement of the 12th century. Their Church was only finally absorbed into the English Church when the Welsh State was absorbed at the end of the 13th century.

It has been remarked in the course of this chapter that Augustine's mission did but a small part of the work they had come to do. The following summary of the means by which the various kingdoms of Saxon England were converted, will show how small a part of the island they succeeded in christianizing.

Kent alone was christianized permanently by Augustine and his band.

Redwald, king of the East Angles, was baptized in Kent, and thus owed his Christianity to Augustine's mission. But he and his relapsed into heathenism, and Sigebert, the succeeding king of the East Angles, who is said to have been the first to establish schools in those parts, having been educated in Gaul, procured the reconversion of his kingdom by the missionary labours of Felix, a Burgundian prelate, from whom Felixstow and probably Flixton derive their names.

The East Saxons were christianized by Augustine's mission, but, as we have seen, they relapsed into heathenism. The Italian bishop of London, Mellitus, fled from his see and left it unoccupied for forty-six years, when the Celtic Cedd became bishop of London, and Sigebert, the king of the East Saxons—not the East Anglian Sigebert—was baptized by Finan, the Scottish successor of Aidan in Northumbria. The

East Saxons once more relapsed, and their final conversion was at length accomplished by Jaruman of Lichfield, of the Scottish succession of bishops, A.D. 664.

Northumbria, as we have seen, was christianized by Augustine's mission, relapsed, and was reconverted by Aidan, of the Scottish Church.

The West Saxons were christianized by Birinus, an Italian prelate who came over independently of the Canterbury mission, and apparently after the demonstration of the want of success of that mission. The Pope advised him to seek consecration in Italy, and not from Honorius, Augustine's successor, and he was accordingly consecrated before leaving for England by the bishop of Genoa.[1]

The South Saxons, to preach to whom the Canterbury mission had but to cross the boundary between Kent and Sussex, were christianized by the Northumbrian Wilfrid, a keen Romanizer, but brought up in the Scottish Church.

The Middle Angles and Mercians received Christianity from Northumbria, after Oswald had re-established it there by the aid of the Scottish Aidan.

Thus it would appear that the little kingdom of Kent, with its bishoprics of Canterbury and Rochester, was the only part of this island permanently converted by Augustine and his band. By far the larger portion of the island was christianized by means of the Scottish Church with its centre at Iona, whose knowledge of Christianity could be traced through Ireland

[1] The Canterbury mission seems to have been treated as a failure by Rome, for after Augustine's death no pall was sent to his successors till the conversion of Northumbria.

to its nucleus in the British Church, one branch of which Augustine so unfortunately offended.

Besides the time of keeping Easter, and the tonsure, the British Church had other rites which differed from those introduced by Augustine, and by the sage advice of Pope Gregory, Augustine retained some of them for use in England. The lessons read from Scripture at Ordination were apparently peculiar to the British Church. The practice of anointing the hands of deacons, priests, and bishops at Ordination was another peculiar rite, and was retained in the Anglo-Saxon Church. This being so, it is probable that other practices peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon Church were in like manner retained from the British use, though we have not the same historical ground for the supposition: such were the prayer at giving the stole to deacons, the delivering the Gospels to deacons, the rite of investing priests with the stole. A version of the Holy Scriptures which differed from other known versions must have been in use in the British Church, if early quotations from Scripture are to be taken as made correctly and not from memory.

Portions of buildings almost certainly used as churches in British times still remain. These are found in the Castle of Dover, at Richborough and Reculver, probably at Lyminge in Kent, and at Brixworth in Northamptonshire. The site of the old British church of St. Martin's, Canterbury, is still marked. A few sepulchral monuments of the same early date have been discovered, and a considerable number of pieces of pottery and other remains bearing Christian symbols.

CHAPTER VI.

BEDE'S WRITINGS. THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

BEDE'S greatest work was the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People.* It was undertaken at the request of King Ceolwulf, and no pains were spared by Bede to make it worthy of its subject. He applied in the first place to Albinus, the Abbat of Canterbury, for exact information respecting the history of Christianity in that part of the island. Albinus had been a pupil of Archbishop Theodore and of Abbat Hadrian, and from them he had learned, in that accurate way in which men with few or no books do learn what they hear, the true account of what had been done in their time. Theodore was the great consolidator of the English Church, and thus the history of the most important period of its existence was made known to Bede almost at first hand. For the earlier history of the Church in Kent, Albinus referred to the records in his keeping, and he sent Nothelm, a priest of London, to search the archives in Rome, where Nothelm found some valuable letters of Gregory and other popes which Bede incorporated in his history. Daniel, Bishop of the West Saxons (the south-west part of the island, west of Sussex), sent him a written account of the commencement of Christianity in that district,

as also in Sussex and the Isle of Wight. The monks of Læstingau (Lastingham) gave him information respecting the missionary labours of Cedd and his brother Ceadda among the Mercians in the centre of England. From the same source he learned the details of the revival of Christianity in Essex, whose capital was London, many years after it had been expelled by paganism in Augustine's old age. Abbat Esius was his authority for the eastern counties, where also a good deal was learned from tradition. Bishop Cunebert and other persons of good credit told him the story of the province of Lindsey (Lincolnshire). As to his own province, Northumbria, he had the faithful testimony of innumerable persons of repute. For the commencement of his history, down to the coming of Augustine (A.D. 596), he was indebted to the writings of earlier historians.

Some idea of the care with which Bede compiled his books may be gathered from the account he has left of the composition of his Life of St. Cuthbert, bishop of Lindisfarne. He informs his readers in a preface, that he had not presumed to write any of the deeds of so great a man without minute investigation. He obtained his information from those who had known the beginning, the middle, and the end of Cuthbert's life, and to establish the truth of what he wrote, he gave the names of those from whom he learned various parts of the story. When the life was written, he still kept it back from publication in order that he might submit portions of it to the criticism of one of the brethren of Jarrow, Herefrid

the priest, and of others who had known Cuthbert intimately. The book, amended in accordance with the suggestions of these competent persons, was sent to the monks of Lindisfarne, at whose request it had been undertaken by Bede, and during two days it was read in the presence of the elder brethren there. They found that not any one part of it needed alteration, and they decided by common consent that it was to be accepted and read without hesitation, and to be copied for publication. The Bishop of Lindisfarne, and apparently some of the brethren, suggested in conversation certain additions, which Bede describes as equally important with what he had already written. He reminded them, however, that the work as it stood had been very carefully considered and finished, and he did not think it convenient and right to insert new matter.

The opening chapter of the Ecclesiastical History is full of interest, since it contains a description of England and Ireland as they were in Bede's time. Britain excelled in grain and in trees, and in pasture for cattle. In some parts of the island vines grew. Land fowl and water fowl abounded. The rivers were full of fish, especially salmon and eels. Seals and porpoises were very frequently taken, and whales too. Pearl-mussels were found, containing pearls of different colours, ruby, purple, violet, and green, besides the ordinary white pearl. There was a superabundance of shellfish (cockles) from which scarlet dye was made of so excellent a character that neither sun nor rain made it fade, and it became more and more brilliant

with age. There were saline springs and hot springs, and baths were arranged at these places for both sexes. Bede accounts for the hot springs by a dictum of St. Basil, that water grows hot even to scalding when running over certain metals. There were mines of copper, iron, lead, and silver; with plenty of jet, of which Bede remarks that when rubbed it holds fast anything to which it is applied, as amber does. He adds that when heated it drives away serpents. Probably it does, when it is hot enough.

The climate of Ireland far surpassed that of England. Snow scarcely ever lay there three days. The winter was so mild, that the Irish never made hay in the summer for winter provender, or built stables for their horses. There were no snakes. Attempts were frequently made to take snakes over from Britain, but as soon as Irish air reached the ship, they died. Indeed so specific a remedy against snakes was anything Irish, that a drink made from the scrapings of the leaves of books that had been in Ireland cured their bite. Ireland was rich in milk and honey; there were plenty of vines; fish and fowl abounded; and the island was remarkable for deer and goats.

Bede speaks of Britain as having been at one time more rich in great towns than it was in his time. It had formerly, he says, twenty-eight noble cities, besides innumerable castles, all furnished with strong walls, towers, gates, and locks. We cannot learn what these twenty-eight cities were, but it is only reasonable to suppose that they were the twenty-eight episcopal sees of which Bede tells, seven in the province of York,

seven in the province of Caerleon, and fourteen in the province of London.

In the north-country home of Bede the nights were short in summer. He writes as if this were equally the case in all parts of the island. The reason, he says, is that Britain lies nearly under the North Pole; and, therefore, the sun has not a long night journey under the earth to reach the Eastern parts again. The nights were sometimes so light that at midnight men could not say whether the evening twilight was still abiding or the morning twilight coming on.

Five languages prevailed in Britain in Bede's time. Divine truth was studied in the language of the English, the Britons, the Scots, the Picts, and the Latins, the last being made common to all by the special study of the Scriptures. The Britons at first had the island to themselves, Bede tells us. After a time, some Picts from Scythia, sailing in long ships, were blown to the coast of Ireland, then occupied by the Scots. The Scots assured the strangers that they could find them no room in Ireland, but, they said, they could give them some excellent advice. There was an island to the eastward which they often saw in clear weather. They had better go and take possession, and if any one opposed them, the Scots would help them. It was an easy way of getting rid of troublesome visitors, and the Scots would probably not have cared very much if the opposition to the Picts had taken the form of annihilation. The Picts, however, made good their hold upon North Britain. Nothing is said of any previous inhabitants, and as

the next thing the Picts wanted was wives, there were perhaps no inhabitants. The Scots, whose advice had proved so excellent, were requested to provide the Picts with permanent advisers in the shape of wives. They consented, but only on a condition which strikes us as curious, namely, that if ever there was any doubt about the succession to the throne, they should take a female line of the royal family in preference to a male line. Bede says that this custom prevailed among the Picts in his time. A similar rule exists in some savage nations in our own day, the reason with them being, that the child of a woman of royal race must have some royal blood in its veins, whoever the father may be. In process of time, as Bede relates, a large party of Scots came over from Ireland, and effected a permanent settlement in North Britain.

The "Ecclesiastical History" carries us from the earliest times down to the year 731 A.D. Speaking generally, everything we know of the Church history of our country down to the eighth century of the Christian era, and very much of what we know of the secular history, is derived from this great work of the priest-monk of Jarrow. The whole of the facts in Chapters II. III. IV. and V. of the present book are taken direct from its pages, excepting two passages from Eddi's life of Wilfrid. Being for the most part concerned with the past history of the Church, the earlier books of the "Ecclesiastical History" do not enter very much into the personal details we should have found so interesting. But the later books give

us much of this detail, and there are some among the writings of Bede which from the nature of the subject throw still more light upon the manners of the time, chiefly as regards the ecclesiastical life. These are especially the Life of St. Cuthbert and the Lives of the earliest Abbats of Wearmouth and Jarrow. We have already seen that Bede gives in one of his Homilies some details of the life of Benedict Biscop, the founder and first abbat of these two monasteries. In the Life he gives fuller information. Benedict was of a noble family of Northumbria, of the Angles, as Bede puts it, and worthy of the society of Angels, a pun copied from Pope Gregory. He was a minister of King Oswy, and had received from him a grant of land suitable to his station, according to the custom of those times. We see another reference to this custom in Bede's letter to Archbishop Egbert, where he laments that the kings had been so profuse in their grants for the establishment of monasteries, that they had no lands left to give to the sons of nobles, who either were compelled to leave their country, or led idle and dissolute lives at home.

At the early age of twenty-five, Biscop resigned his office, apparently a military command, and with it the donative he had held. In obedience to a desire he had long felt, he went to Rome to visit the tombs of the apostles. Those were, no doubt, the real or supposed tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul, of which Eusebius says, that St. Peter's tomb was to be seen on the Vatican, St. Paul's on the Ostian Way. He then returned to England and passed some time in medita-

ting upon all that he had seen, especially upon the charms of the ecclesiastical life; and we are told that he urged his views upon such persons as he could persuade to hear him. The son of King Oswy, Alfrid, became anxious to visit the holy places in Rome, and arranged with Biscop that they should go together. Oswy, however, made Alfrid stay at home, but Biscop carried out the intended journey and remained in Rome for some months. He then went to the monks in the island of Lerins, and received the tonsure. After spending two years there, he was "overcome by love of the Apostle St. Peter," and returned to Rome, the arrival of a trading vessel enabling him to leave the island.

He reached Rome at a fortunate crisis. The kings of Kent and Northumbria had requested[1] Pope Vitalian to send them a suitable man as Archbishop of Canterbury, the archbishop elect having died of the plague in Rome. Vitalian selected, as has been already stated, Theodore, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a man of great learning, skilled in the Latin and Greek languages. Abbat Hadrian, another man of much learning, was given to Theodore as a counsellor and assistant, and Vitalian added Biscop to the party. These three selections show that Vitalian possessed great insight into character, and knew what was good for England under the circumstances then existing. Theodore was an Eastern, not a Western, and he was not even in full orders. He had to wait long, though he was nearer seventy than sixty years old, till the marks of his Eastern tonsure had disappeared, and the hair had grown across the front of the head, so as to allow of

[1] So Vitalian seems to have understood them.

the Western tonsure, to represent the crown of thorns. Notwithstanding his advanced age, his minor orders, and his Eastern training, Vitalian determined that Theodore was the right man. And throughout an extraordinarily active life as archbishop for more than twenty years, Theodore much more than justified the choice. Before his time, England was a missionary station; he left it an established Church. Of Biscop we are told that Vitalian saw he would become a man of wisdom, industry, piety, and nobleness. He therefore commanded him to give up the idea of living far from his country in the service of Christ. He set before him, as Bede says, the prospect of a higher usefulness. He appointed him to convey to England that teacher of truth which the country so earnestly desired, and to act as his interpreter and guide both on the way and after their arrival in Kent. Biscop cheerfully agreed to this course, and going to Canterbury with Theodore, he became abbat of St. Peter's monastery there, and taught till Hadrian came to take his place as abbat and head of the educational staff. In this useful work he spent two years. The candle thus lighted by Theodore and Biscop burned with more and more brilliance in England for nearly a hundred and fifty years, till the dark times of the Danish invasions.

Again, for a third time, he went to Rome. His object was to purchase books of sacred literature and relics of martyrs. Besides those which he bought, he received some as presents from friends. At Vienne, also, purchases had been made for him, and he came home by way of that town to add them to

his store. His first intention was to visit the King of Wessex (the district to the west of Sussex), who had been a useful friend to him; but hearing that Coinwalch was dead, he came to Northumbria, where Egfrid had been king for three years. His enthusiasm for the monastic life, and the wonders he had to show in manuscripts and relics, so wrought upon Egfrid that he made him a large grant of land out of his own property and bade him build a monastery. This was commenced at the mouth of the river Wear, in the year 674 after Christ.

A year after the foundation of Monk Wearmouth, the indefatigable Biscop crossed the seas to Gaul to look for masons able to build a church of stone after the Roman style, for which he had a great love. He brought the workmen back with him, and so much energy was given to the task that within a year from the foundations being laid the roof was on and masses were celebrated. When the church was nearly finished, he sent messengers to Gaul, being too busy, no doubt, in superintending the building to find time to go himself, and hired workers in glass to fill the windows of the church, cloisters, and dining-rooms. Bede informs us that the art of making glass was up to that time unknown in Britain, and adds that the Gallic workmen remained long enough to teach the English people their handicraft, which was well fitted for many ecclesiastical uses.

We have no detailed account of the consecration of the Abbey Church. But it will not be out of place to give here the description of Wilfrid's conse-

cration of his church at Ripon, as we find it in Eddi's contemporary Life of Wilfrid. The church was built of polished stone, from the foundations in the ground up to the roof; it was ornamented with numerous pillars and porches; within, it was adorned with silver and gold and purple. When all was ready, Wilfrid invited the most Christian kings Egfrid and Ælwin, the abbats, prefects, lieutenants, and all persons of position. After Solomon's example, they consecrated the church and the prayers of the people uttered therein; they dedicated the altar with its bases, put on it a purple cloth inwoven with gold, and the people communicated. Then Wilfrid stood before the altar with his face to the people, and read out in a clear voice a list of the lands which the kings had given for their souls, gifts ratified that day by the consent and subscription of the bishops and all the chief men; he read also a list of the various Church lands which the British clergy had deserted when they fled before the sword of the Saxons,—"before the sword of our race," as Wilfrid had to put it. The gifts of the kings were large, including lands in various places, whose names were recited. When this address was ended, the kings and people commenced a great feast, which lasted through three days and three nights. Wilfrid added to the possessions of the church a marvel of beauty unheard of before those times, namely, a manuscript of the Four Gospels written on parchment richly illuminated, and enclosed in cases of pure gold adorned with gems. Bede says, as we

have seen, that the art of making glass was unknown in England till the time when Biscop introduced workmen into Northumbria; but Wilfrid had before that time used glass abundantly at Ripon, and had also glazed the windows of the dilapidated church he found at York.

Biscop further obtained from Gaul everything that was necessary for the service of the church, such as vestments and sacred vessels, because these could not be procured in England. Some of the things which he thought necessary for the full perfection of his church and monastery were not to be found even in Gaul, and in order to supply these he set out a fourth time for Rome, as soon as he had thoroughly established the rules of the monastery and had brought everything into working order. It was on this occasion that he collected the pictures of which mention has been made, and secured the services of the arch-chanter of St. Peter's in Rome, John, the Abbat of St. Martin's, who not only taught the monks how to sing the services in the Roman fashion, but left at Wearmouth considerable manuscript information as to the ceremonies proper to different festivals. We have a list of the pictures. First, there were likenesses of the Virgin Mary and the twelve Apostles, to be placed on boards fixed across the nave from side to side. Next came pictures of scenes from ecclesiastical history, for the south wall of the nave; and then pictures from the Revelation of St. John, for the north wall. Thus, as Bede says, every one who entered the church, whether he could

read or not, could see, wherever he turned his eyes, the countenances of Christ and His Saints; he could dwell upon the blessings of the Incarnation; he could examine his heart closely, having before his eyes the perils of the last judgment. This last use of the pictures will suggest to the recollection of readers the grotesque frescoes seen in so many village churches in these days of the removal of whitewash, the huge gaping dragon's mouth full of flames, representing the place of torment, with busy demons hurling in the souls of men.

A vision recorded by Bede of a Northumbrian of his time, who was supposed to have risen from the dead, was probably due to the sight of a picture of this kind, and we may not unreasonably suppose that the details were actually taken from one of Biscop's pictures at Monk Wearmouth. This man having apparently died in the middle of the night and come to life again in the morning, saw during the period of his trance the places of torment and of happiness. There were two degrees of torment, the two scenes in the latter of which may have been represented on the walls of the church. First he came to a broad valley full of men's souls. One side was piercingly cold, the other was a flaming and unquenchable fire. The unhappy souls, unable to endure the cutting cold, leaped into the flames; and then, unable to endure the flames, leaped back into the snow and hail. Thus the valley was filled with human souls flying always in restless agony from one side to the other. It is a striking picture. The second place of

torment was a vast pit, from which from time to time great clouds of dusky flame sprang up, blazing for a while, and then falling back into the abyss. These clouds of flame were full of souls, carried up like sparks, and sinking again with the flames. Had Bede lived now in that same country of coal and iron, he could have seen, whenever he looked forth at night, apt illustrations of this part of the vision. As the dead man stood there, the air became horrid with demoniac laughter and shrieks of tortured souls. Demons were seen dragging men's souls to the pit of fire and plunging in with them, descending deeper and deeper, till the jeers of the torturers could no longer be distinguished from the shrieks of the victims. Among these victims were a tonsured priest, a layman, and a woman; and the words seem to imply that they were persons whom the entranced man recognised.[1] Such, probably, were some of Biscop's pictures for the instruction of the unlearned. It may be worth while to add that the vision produced a lasting impression on Drithelme, for such was his name. Bede had the story from an intimate friend of the man, who told him further that all his life Drithelme lived in the full and clear consciousness of what he had seen. His home being near a river, he was wont to walk into the water up to his waist, and at times up to his neck, and to stand there saying his prayers, now and again dipping completely under water. When he came out, he never changed or dried his clothes. In the winter he would stand in

[1] See the remainder of this vision on pages 140 and 141.

the river while the pieces of broken ice dashed against him, and when one called to him from the bank, "I wonder, brother Drithelme, that you can endure such cold!" he would reply, "I, at least, have seen severer cold than this." And when one said to him, "I wonder how you can endure such austere fasting!" he would reply, "I, at least, have seen severer austerity than this."

A further boon which the founder obtained for his monasteries was a letter of privileges from the Pope. This secured the institutions from interference from without. Bede expressly says that this letter was obtained not only with the consent of the king but by his earnest wish. And we find by a further reference at a later period of Bede's History, that the validity of the letter depended upon its confirmation by English authority. He relates that in the time of Abbat Ceolfrid, when further property had been acquired for the monastery of Jarrow, a letter of privileges was obtained from Pope Sergius similar to that which Pope Agatho had granted to Biscop. This, he adds, was brought back to Britain, and being exhibited before a synod, was confirmed by the signatures of the bishops present and of King Alfrid, as the former letter was confirmed by the king and bishops of the time.

King Egfrid was much struck by the zeal and piety of Biscop, whom Bede frequently calls Venerable, little supposing that by that title he would himself be known in after-ages throughout the Christian world. The king would appear, also, to

have formed a high opinion of the advantages of the monastic life. He made an additional grant of a considerable amount of land, and stipulated that another monastery should be built on it, as a sister establishment to the monastery of Wearmouth. Within a year the new monastery was built, and Biscop sent as its head his most strenuous assistant and companion in travel, Ceolfrid, with a party of seventeen monks. He then appointed Easterwine to act as abbat of Wearmouth, and himself set out on a fifth journey to Rome.[1] As usual, he came back loaded with all manner of valuable ecclesiastical possessions. There were large numbers of manuscripts and of holy pictures. Some of the latter, representing scenes in our Lord's life, he hung round a church he had built at Wearmouth in honour of the Virgin Mary. Others were employed for adorning the church[2] and monastery at Jarrow. Bede describes these last as arranged with the utmost skill, so as to show the harmony of the Old and New Testament. Thus two pictures were hung side by side, one showing Isaac bearing the wood for the sacrifice of himself, the other showing our Lord bearing His cross. Another pair of pictures in juxtaposition showed the serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, and the Son of Man lifted up on the cross. Biscop knew how to make the most of his opportunities when on his

[1] About A.D. 685.

[2] The dedication stone of the church of Jarrow, bearing Abbat Ceolfrid's name, is still in existence. "Bede's chair" is still shown at Jarrow. "Bede's well" also exists.

travels. We find him bringing from Rome two royal robes or palls, made entirely of silk and worked in an incomparable manner. These he sold to the king and his councillors for an important piece of land on the south side of the mouth of the Wear. The price paid may remind us that four hundred years before, a Roman emperor had refused his wife a silk dress. He also brought a manuscript collection of geographical writings, of beautiful workmanship, which he sold to the same king, Alfrid of Northumbria, for a considerably larger piece of land on the river Fresca.

A life of such activity and usefulness was closed by a peaceful death. Bede's account of the illness and death is written very much in the spirit in which his own disciple came in time to write the story of his death in its turn. Biscop was stricken with palsy, which for three years crept from one part of his body to another, beginning at the lower extremities. His colleague in the Abbey of Wearmouth, Easterwine's successor Sigfrid, was taken ill about the same time with a wasting disease. When neither of the abbats could visit the other, both having lost the use of their limbs, the monks carried Sigfrid to Benedict and laid him so that the two loving friends could give each other the kiss of peace. Bede says that they were so weak that, though their heads were laid on the same pillow, they could not of themselves turn so that their lips should meet, and the brethren had to guide their heads before they could perform the parting act of Christian love. It is a subject worthy of the skill and imagination of the best of the painters of old,

and there are painters even now who might do justice to it.

There were three points on which the dying abbat laid great stress in his practical injunctions to his monks. One was the strict maintenance of the Rule which he had given them. He assured them that its several regulations were not devised by himself or of his own will. He had seen in his large experience on the Continent seventeen monasteries whose rules he preferred to all others, and from these seventeen he had copied the statutes which he imposed upon his twin monasteries. Another point was the magnificent library he had collected. This library, most abundant in all that was necessary for instruction in sacred matters, he would have kept entire; no neglect was to be allowed, no division or dispersion. The last point was, the succession to the abbacy; and here we have a suggestive hint of the prevalence of an evil of which Bede wrote strongly to Archbishop Egbert some years later. He urged the brethren not to elect any one as abbat by reason of his birth. He would have no claims of next of kin. He was particularly anxious that they should not elect his own brother; he would rather his monastery became a wilderness than have this man to succeed him, for they all knew that he did not walk in the way of truth. Apparently he feared that a claim something like that of hereditary succession might be set up. That the fear was no visionary one may be seen from later ecclesiastical history, where benefices of various kinds, even bishoprics, were handed down from father

to son; and the evils arising from this practice had no doubt much to do with the enforcement of celibacy among the clergy. In Biscop's own time the hereditary descent of an abbey was no unknown thing; thus the Abbess of Wetadun persuaded Bishop John of Hexham to cure her daughter after the flesh, whom she designed to make abbess after her. Not only would Biscop not have a hereditary abbat, he would not have an abbat brought in from another monastery. The duty of the brethren was, in accordance with the Rule of Abbat Benedict the Great, in accordance with their own statutes, to inquire carefully who of themselves was best fitted for the post, and, after due election, to have him confirmed as abbat by the bishop's benediction. This rule had, of course, much to recommend it. But in monastic as in collegiate life there comes a time when the election of a head from outside is necessary to the well-being of the institution.

When Benedict grew worse he was unable to sleep at night, and his solace was to have the Book of Job and other parts of Scripture read to him. He became so weak that he could not rise to pray, and could not depend upon himself to say the words of the daily Psalms. He therefore summoned to his cell a party of the brothers at each of the canonical hours, and dividing them into two choirs, made them sing the appointed Psalms antiphonally, joining in himself whenever he felt his voice strong enough. On the night of his death he received the Eucharistic Sacrament as a viaticum. He died while a portion of the Gospel was being read by a priest. It was remarked

as an omen of good, that the brethren who were engaged in the church in singing the Psalter through while he was *in extremis*, had reached Psalm 82 (our 83), headed "Lord, who is like unto Thee?" a sure token, as they believed, that all the enemies of his soul were overcome by the power of the Lord.

At the time of Biscop's death, Bede was about sixteen years old. He had been an inmate of the monastery at Wearmouth for one year, and had spent eight years at Jarrow. Thus he writes of what he had himself seen and known, in his account of Benedict and of the three or four abbats who succeeded him. His account of Easterwine, whom we have mentioned above, is especially vivid, and we may suppose that the charming combination of physical strength and kindly courtesy for which Easterwine was distinguished, took firm hold of the ready sympathy and memory of a growing boy. Here is a delightful picture of him as Bede draws him, when he entered upon the joint abbacy at the early age of thirty-one, to be carried off by a pestilence after five years of gentle and powerful rule. He was a young man of great strength and sweet speech; high-spirited and generous; pleasant to look upon. Humility was a marked feature in his character. He was cousin on the father's side to Abbat Benedict, and had been a chief officer of the king, but Bede remarks that he never from his first entrance as a monk expected that any deference should be paid him, or that the abbat should show him any favour as a near relative. He found pleasure in threshing and winnowing, milking the ewes and kine, work-

ing in the bakehouse, the garden, and the kitchen. When he was promoted to the abbacy, he made it his principle to remain unchanged in his manner to the brethren. When necessity arose, he inflicted the punishments laid down in the Rule under which they lived; but he held that prevention was better than punishment, and endeavoured to make the brethren feel unwilling to bring a cloud of pain over his open countenance. When he went out to look after the business of the monastery, if he came upon any of the brethren at work, he would join them for a time, taking the plough-tail or the smith's hammer. He had the same food as the brethren, and in the same room, which Bede notes apparently as an unusual arrangement. He slept in the common dormitory, where he had slept when he was only "priest Easter-wine," and even when death was known to be coming on, he retained his pallet almost to the last, being removed to a more private room only five days before his death. From this room he came out but once alive, and on that occasion he sat in the open air and called up all the brethren one by one, and gave them the kiss of peace, they the while weeping bitterly over the impending loss of such a friend and ruler.

Ceolfrid has been mentioned as the first abbat of Jarrow, the abbat who took Bede with him from Wearmouth. A year before Biscop's death, Ceolfrid had been associated with him in the joint abbacy of the two monasteries, and he ruled as sole abbat after that event for twenty-seven years. During this long tenure of office, Bede grew to man's estate, was ordained deacon and priest, studied and wrote. He

was about forty-three when Ceolfrid died, and it is probable that if the story of his refusing the abbacy is correct, the occasion was the vacancy caused by Ceolfrid's resignation. Bede's portrait of this abbat's work is drawn from life. He built many oratories in the monastery. He largely increased the sacred vessels and vestments. He doubled the libraries of the two monasteries,—little fear of his needing Benedict's warning against dissipating the books. He gave to each of the monasteries a complete Bible of the new translation, as Bede describes Jerome's work, Benedict having brought from Rome one of the old translation. He found money to add to the land which Benedict had received in exchange for the book of geography mentioned above, and for the money and land he obtained an estate more conveniently situated, half the size of the original endowment of Jarrow, at the village of Sambuce, perhaps Sandoc. He also gave to Jarrow a considerable estate at Dalton. He showed incomparable skill in saying prayers and in chanting; great energy in punishing those who deserved it, with moderation towards weaker vessels; and an abstinence unusual among rulers—so Bede says—in eating and drinking and in the matter of dress.

After twenty-seven or twenty-eight years spent thus, he found that his charge had greatly increased, and his powers of administration, weakened by age, were no longer equal to the task. He therefore announced his resignation of the abbacy. Among the reasons for his resignation, Bede mentions one which did Ceolfrid great honour, and might be adopted by some in the present day whose means are sufficient to enable

them to resign their offices to more vigorous hands. He felt that he was now unfitted, owing to the infirmities of old age, for impressing upon the brethren the due forms of spiritual exercise by precept and by example. Within three days of the announcement of his intention to resign, he set out from the monastery, in spite of the tears and supplications of the brethren, who entreated him not to deprive them of his presence and rule. Nothing could stop him. Two motives urged him to immediate departure. One was the fear lest he should die before he could reach Rome,—Rome which he had visited in his youth with Abbat Benedict, Rome where he wished to end his life. He feared lest any of his friends or of the nobles of the country, who held him in much honour, should delay his departure if the knowledge of his intention became generally known. The other motive was a curious one. He was afraid that some one might give him money, which he would have no opportunity of repaying without considerable loss of time and interference with his journey. For, Bede explains, whenever any one gave him anything or did him any favour, he invariably made a return fully equivalent, either at once or after a due interval.

The leave-taking was very solemn. Bede describes it in a manner which leaves little or no doubt that he was himself an actor in the scene. At first dawn on one of the early days of June, when the season for travel had fairly commenced, mass was sung in the church of the blessed Virgin Mary and in the church of St. Peter. Those present communicated. Then all the brethren of Wearmouth and some of those

from Jarrow assembled in St. Peter's. Ceolfrid lighted the incense for the last time in the accustomed place, said a prayer at the altar, and gave the blessing, standing on the steps of the altar with the censer in his hands. Litanies were sung, interrupted by the sobs of the brethren. Then they passed out into the oratory of St. Laurence, which was in the dormitory opposite the door of the church. There Ceolfrid said his last farewell. He charged them to let brotherly love continue, and to correct the faults of the erring. He forgave all against whom he had ought, and prayed pardon of all who had ought against him, if he had ever administered his office with undue severity. The whole company went down to the banks of the Wear, where the ferryboat lay. They knelt and received from him the kiss of peace. He prayed, and entered the boat with the companions of his journey. The deacons of the church went with him in the boat, bearing lighted tapers and the golden cross. Arrived at the other side, he adored the cross; then mounted his horse and rode away. He left in the two monasteries not less than six hundred brethren.

Ceolfrid's fear lest he should die before he could reach Rome was justified by the event. Some delay was caused by their having to wait for a ship on the English coast. During this interval the new abbat, Huetbert, announced to him in person his election to the vacant office, which Ceolfrid approved and Bishop Acca of Hexham confirmed. He reached Langres, only to die there, on the 25th of September, 716, and he was buried in the monastery of the twin martyrs, one mile from the town on the south side.

He was in his seventy-fifth year when he died, and though so advanced in age, and suffering from illness, he persisted to the last in maintaining the rigour of the Rule which he had so long administered. Every day of his hundred and fourteen days journey from Wearmouth to Langres he observed the canonical hours of prayer, and twice daily he chanted the Psalter. Even when he was so ill that he could not ride on horseback, but was carried in a litter, he sang mass every morning. Indeed there were only four days on which he did not sing mass,—one when he was on the seas, and three when he was dying.

Here Bede's history of the Abbats of Wearmouth and Jarrow ends. He had come down to the time of his own abbat, Huetbert, whose life was not as yet a matter for history. In an imperfect list of saints honoured in the North of England, written in the tenth century and to be seen in the library of Corpus Christi College in Cambridge, Benedict, Easterwine, and Ceolfrid all appear as saints, their days being respectively the 12th of January, the 7th of March, and the 25th of September.

It may be added that the Abbey of Wearmouth suffered severely in the Danish wars, and was destroyed in 867. It was again destroyed by fire in an inroad made by Malcolm, King of Scotland, in 1070. Jarrow is said to have been destroyed by the Danes in 793, and again by the forces of William of Normandy in 1069, when they devastated the country between Humber and Tyne. Walcher, Bishop of Durham, restored both monasteries, and in 1083 Bishop William of Carileph made them cells of Durham.

CHAPTER VII.

BEDE'S WRITINGS. THE LIFE OF ST. CUTHBERT.

BEDE'S Life of St. Cuthbert was undertaken at the request of the bishop and monks of Lindisfarne. We have already seen the extreme care which he took to make it accurate. The story is full of miracles from beginning to end, and each miracle comes down to us with the solemn attestation of those who knew Cuthbert well, and had lived under his personal rule. Thus there can be no doubt that in that age the frequent occurrence of miracles was accepted as an incontestable fact. Bede's own feeling in the matter seems to have been that it was, perhaps, as well to give his authority for any miraculous story he related; but beyond that, there is no appearance of an expectation on his part that his accounts of miracles would be disbelieved. Even when he describes in a circumstantial manner the steps he took to secure perfect accuracy in his Life of St. Cuthbert, he does not in the most remote way suggest that without such explanations of his method of procedure his account might be doubted because of the miracles it contained. And in his Ecclesiastical History, the latter part of which contains many miraculous stories, there is no sign to indicate that a miracle was less likely to be believed than the fact that two comets appeared in

the year 729. But as we proceed with the Life of St. Cuthbert, we shall see that the great mass of what is called miracle is susceptible of a simpler explanation, even where it is not to be accounted for by the natural tendency to exaggerate the influence of one who showed forth so many of the signs of an apostle as Cuthbert did.

Cuthbert died in the year 687. Bede was therefore thirteen or fourteen years old at the time, and Jarrow is no great distance from Lindisfarne. There is no reason why Bede may not have seen Cuthbert. Supposing the Life of St. Cuthbert to have been one of his later works, it must at least have been written within thirty-five or forty years of Cuthbert's death. But in the Ecclesiastical History he says that many years had elapsed since he wrote the Life, and, indeed, the later part of the Ecclesiastical History contains a sort of supplement to it. Monks in Lindisfarne who had reached the age of sixty had spent their boyhood and early manhood under Cuthbert's influence. Priests of that age had been ordained by him. In this, as in some other cases, Bede had talked with men on or for whom miracles had been wrought, and had heard their account of the miracles; indeed, he sometimes gives the account in the actual words of the narrator. It is difficult to reject such testimony on the ground that we know much more than our fathers, and are sure that they were ignorant and superstitious. If we are to reject all these stories wholesale, so far as their miraculous part is concerned, we must do it on the ground that

natural phenomena and remarkable coincidences were interpreted and exaggerated into miracles, in the case of men so remarkable for their piety that the people looked upon them as specially favoured by God, and endued with power over the elements and over diseases. Such exaggeration would, of course, lead sometimes to false claims and pure invention on the part of unscrupulous or over-wrought men.

A large proportion of the miraculous stories told by Bede have nothing necessarily miraculous about them. Take, for instance, the first miracle recorded in Cuthbert's life. The future saint was afflicted suddenly with a serious lameness when he was a mere boy. One of his knees became very painful, and an angry tumour formed near it. The muscles of the thigh were contracted, and the leg hung bent and useless. One day, when he had been carried out by his attendants and left to lie a while out of doors in the fresh air, a man, clad in white, rode up on a magnificent horse. Seeing that Cuthbert did not rise, he asked if he had no respect to show for such a visitor. Cuthbert replied that he would most gladly rise and pay him reverence if he were not tied by the leg to his couch. The stranger dismounted and examined the knee. He prescribed what we may call a bread-poultice. "Boil some wheat-flour in milk, lay it on warm, and you will be cured." Cuthbert followed this excellent advice, and in a few days the leg was healed. Then he perceived that his visitor was an angel, sent by Him who sent Raphael to restore the eyesight to Tobit. Curiously enough,

Bede's only doubt in the matter is whether all readers will believe that an angel rode on horseback. To satisfy the scruples of such, he refers them to the passage in the Maccabees where angels came on horseback to the aid of Judas Maccabeus. The remedy recommended by the stranger was not quite what the Saxon leeches would have employed. Their treatment for the swelling of knees and of shanks was this :—Take the root symphoniace (Saxon henbelle, our henbane) and pound it, lay it thereto, and it will take away the swelling. For the racking pain in the joint their prescription was—Take the netherward part of marche, and honey, and the smede of wheaten meal, and the bowels of a wig (ear-wig); rub them together, and lay on. Wheat flour was thus common to two of the prescriptions.

Or, to take the miracle which comes next in order in Cuthbert's life. The story is worth extracting, if it were only for the curious and interesting light it throws upon the transition from paganism to Christianity, which was by no means complete in Cuthbert's time. The monks of Tynemouth—they had been changed into nuns before Bede wrote—had gone up the Tyne in five vessels to fetch wood for the use of the monastery. As they floated down the river again, a violent wind came from the west and blew them beyond their landing-place, in spite of the assistance rendered by boats which the remaining monks launched when they saw that the ships were unmanageable. Human help being of no avail, and the five vessels being blown out so far to sea that

they looked like birds riding on the waves, the monks issued forth from the monastery, and grouping themselves on the extreme point of the rocks prayed to God for the safety of their brethren. There seemed to be none to hearken, for the storm continued to rage with unabated fury. Then the common people, who were collected in crowds to see what would happen to the monks, began to revile. The monks, they said, deserved it, for abandoning the ordinary manner of life and conforming to new and unheard-of practices. Cuthbert, a layman and little more than a mere lad, was among the crowd, on the opposite side of the river from that on which the monks were praying. He reproached the people, and asked them whether it would not be better to pray for the safety of the monks than to revile them in their misfortune. The people indignantly refused to pray for them. "No one should pray for them! Might God spare none of them! They had taken away from men the ancient worship, and how the new worship was to be carried out no one knew." Then Cuthbert knelt down among them and prayed with his face to the ground. The wind fell at once, and the ships were carried by the waters to the landing-place they had missed. The rustics blushed for their unbelief and became firm Christians. It is evident that this miracle, which Bede had at second-hand from one of the rustics present, whose truthfulness was unimpeachable, may have been nothing beyond the ordinary course of nature. The monks would start at first with a flowing tide to drift up the

estuary to the place where the wood was to be procured. Having spent some time in loading their ships, they would drop down again with the falling tide. The wind and the tide hurried them past their landing-place. The monks prayed in vain till the tide turned, for there was no adequate reason for disturbing the course of nature. It is well known how calm an estuary becomes on a sudden, under certain circumstances of wind, &c., when the "first of flood" is imminent. We have only to suppose that Cuthbert's prayer coincided in time with this calm and with the turn of the tide, and then without any miracle we can imagine the five ships drifting quietly up with the tide to their landing-place. In fact, the whole scene, without the monks and the prayers, has often been enacted in tidal waters.

Another miraculous event in Cuthbert's life may be mentioned, as coming under the same category of coincidence, not miracle. When he was still a young man, and not as yet a member of any brotherhood, he set forth on horseback alone. About nine or ten o'clock in the morning he halted at a village which lay on his road, to rest himself and to give his horse some food. A pious woman begged him to let her prepare dinner for him; but he refused, on the ground that it was a fast day, being Friday. Bede remarks that on Friday the faithful fasted till three o'clock in the afternoon. The woman assured him that he would find no house on his way, and he must fast all day and all night if he did not take something then; but he still refused, and after a while

he continued his journey. When evening drew on, he halted at some deserted shepherds' huts, the season being the beginning of winter. Here he tied his horse to the wall, and gave it some dried grass which the wind had torn from the roof. Having no food for himself, he turned to prayer and singing. While thus occupied, he saw the horse pull out a bit more of the thatch, and with it a bundle, which fell to the ground. The bundle was wrapped in linen, and contained half a loaf of bread, still warm, and meat enough for a meal. Cuthbert at once gave thanks for this miraculous bounty, on which he proceeded to feast, dividing the bread into two parts, one for himself and one for his horse. From that time Cuthbert was more than ever determined to fast up to three o'clock on Friday, believing that the supply of food when he was hungry from his long fast was a token of divine approbation. An aged monk of Wearmouth, Ingwald the priest, told this story to Bede, and Cuthbert himself told it to Ingwald. History does not report what the shepherds said when they found their little store of food gone. A further miracle of feeding is related by Bede as having occurred in Cuthbert's experience. An angel brought him three loaves which surpassed the lily in whiteness, the rose in odour, and honey in taste. From that time forward, Bede states that the saint was frequently supplied with food direct from the Lord.

Cuthbert had become a monk before this last miracle of the loaves happened. He chose the Abbey of Melrose as the place of his profession,

knowing, as Bede says in compliment to those for whom he wrote, that the church of Lindisfarne contained many holy men whose precept and example would be of service to him, but attracted to Melrose by the report of the great virtues of Boisil, the prior. Cuthbert rode up to the Abbey gate with his spear in his hand, the ordinary equipment of a layman in those days of insecurity. Boisil was standing at the door, and exclaimed in the hearing of one who told it to Bede, "Behold a servant of the Lord!" In a few days the abbat, who was absent, returned, and on the favourable report of his prior he admitted Cuthbert a monk of Melrose. Some years after this event, King Alfrid of Northumbria granted a tract of land at Ripon to Abbat Eata of Melrose, for the redemption of his soul, and Eata built a monastery there, and sent Cuthbert and others to occupy it. Melrose, it must be remembered, being south of the Forth, was in Northumbria, not in Scotland. Before long, however, Cuthbert and the monks were expelled from Ripon, and other monks were established there. Bede passes over this fact very lightly, for it was delicate ground. He contents himself with saying that since everything in this world is frail and changing, like the ocean when a storm comes on, so the monks of Melrose found themselves expelled from their new home at Ripon. In his Ecclesiastical History he was under no obligation to avoid what might offend Lindisfarne. He tells us that the Melrose monks observed the British rule of time for keeping Easter, and "being left to their choice" by Alfrid, either to

give up their Easter, or to give up their lands, chose the latter alternative and returned to Melrose, Ripon being given to Wilfrid, the eager partisan of the Italian Easter. Thus Cuthbert had an early practical experience of the tender mercies of those who are at variance on ceremonial matters of religion. He spoke with unflinching severity of those who differed from him in this matter of Easter, almost with his last breath.

After a time Boisil died. Cuthbert became prior of Melrose, but, in imitation of prior Boisil, he was very far from confining himself to the domestic business and internal affairs of the monastery, which were the special duties of a prior. He performed these duties with pious zeal, but he did much more. He found that the neighbouring people were at best Christians in name only. They led evil lives, and in time of danger and pestilence they neglected the sacrament of their faith and had recourse to idolatrous remedies, as though they could restrain, by means of pagan mysteries and charms, a blow sent from God. Cuthbert made frequent attempts to eradicate these evils. He sallied forth from the monastery, often on horseback, more often on foot, to preach in the neighbouring villages. He specially selected such hamlets as were situated in mountainous places, difficult of access, and thus likely to deter teachers of less zeal than himself. In these out-of-the-way places he would often spend a week, sometimes two or three weeks or even a month, finding full exercise for his powers of teaching. He had great gifts, and he met with great success. We gather from his biographer that he possessed

three special qualifications for the work. His methods of teaching were skilful; he was determined to press home to the conviction of his hearers any lesson he had once begun; and he had a face like an angel. When such a man, impelled by the love of Christ, gave himself for weeks at a time to the ignorant inhabitants of a hamlet buried among the hills, we need no Bede to tell us the result. "No one dared attempt to hide from him the secrets of his heart. All confessed openly; for they felt they could conceal nothing from him, and they hoped to wipe away their offences by the fruits of repentance which he enjoined."

Several of the miracles recorded in Cuthbert's life give significant evidence of the scantness of the population in the north of England, and of the difficulties and dangers of such journeys as Christian teachers had to take. In addition to the miracles of feeding mentioned above, we read that on one occasion Cuthbert left the monastery of Melrose with two of the brethren on some necessary business which took him to Nithsdale, in the land of the Picts. They went by sea and arrived at their destination on the day after Christmas-day. As soon as they landed, a severe storm set in, which entirely prevented their return. Snow fell for days. They found no one to provide food or shelter. The Epiphany was close at hand, and they were in danger of perishing from cold and hunger. Cuthbert under these trying circumstances did not lose the cheerful and kindly temper for which he was remarkable, nor did he cease to pray for help throughout each night. One morning he took his

companions down to the shore, to the spot where he had spent the night in prayer, and showed them three pieces of flesh of a large fish—a dolphin Bede calls it, probably a porpoise[1]—cut up and prepared for cooking. This he told them was prepared by the Lord, and the number of the pieces, he informed them, signified that in three days' time there would be favourable weather. All fell out as he said. For three days the storm raged violently; on the fourth day a calm came on, followed by a fair wind, which carried them safely back.

On another occasion he went on foot with one boy as an attendant, to preach at a distant village. Cuthbert became tired with the walk long before reaching the place, and turning to the boy he asked him where they should stop to take refreshment, and whether he knew of any one on their road who would supply them with food. The boy confessed that he was thinking about food when Cuthbert spoke, for they had brought no provision with them, and he knew of no one on their way, and he was hungry. Cuthbert pointed to a bird flying in the air, and told the boy that God could feed them even by that eagle. Soon after this, they came to a river, on the bank of which the eagle had alighted. "There is our handmaid," the saint exclaimed, "run and see what God has provided." The boy ran, and found that the eagle had caught a fish of considerable size. Cuthbert took half for themselves, leaving the other half for

[1] Porpoises were used as food in the middle ages, and were considered a delicacy.

the bird, and continued his journey till they reached a village where the fish was cooked.

King Egfrid had a prefect, Hildemer by name, who was devoted to good works with all his house. His wife occupied herself in almsgiving and the exercise of other Christian virtues. Cuthbert often visited them when his business took him in their direction. In the midst of her religious activity, it is said, Hildemer's wife was suddenly afflicted of a devil. She gnashed her teeth, uttered piteous cries, and tossed about her limbs in such a manner as to terrify all who saw her. The prefect saw that she grew worse, and indeed was at the point of death. He rode off in haste to Cuthbert; begged him to send a priest to visit her and give her the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ; and entreated that she might be buried at Melrose. He was ashamed, Bede says, to tell Cuthbert that she was out of her mind, for Cuthbert had always seen her in the possession of her senses. He feared that this affliction might cause him to think that she had not been a true servant of the Lord. When Cuthbert informed him of his determination to come himself instead of sending a priest, he began to weep, for he saw that the saint would detect the concealment of which he had been guilty. Cuthbert divined the cause of his tears, and assured him that so far from thinking such a thing of his wife, he expected to find her well enough to come and meet them and take the reins of his horse. Accordingly, when they drew near to the house, the prefect's wife came out and led Cuthbert's horse by the bridle

till they reached the door, declaring that at the first touch of the rein she felt herself entirely restored to her former state of health.

After many years of active life at Melrose, Cuthbert was transferred by Abbat Eata to Lindisfarne to act as abbat there, apparently as deputy to Eata, who ruled both Lindisfarne and Melrose. From Aidan's time Lindisfarne had had a bishop, and, like Aidan, all its bishops were monks. Bede remarks that it is surprising that so small an island should have both a bishop and an abbat. He explains that the bishop chose some one to rule over the monks as abbat, with the consent of the brethren, and that the bishop, priests, deacons, singers, readers, and all the ecclesiastical staff, lived together in observance of the monastic rule. Cuthbert began to introduce a more strict discipline, and he soon found that some of the brethren preferred the old customs to the new rule. The opposition to him was carried very far. Time after time, when the monks met in conclave, the abbat was wearied by the bitter hostility displayed by the party which stood in the way of reform. On such occasions he would rise suddenly, without a cloud upon his brow, and adjourn the meeting till the next day. When they met again, he would repeat his arguments, as if there had never been any opposition. By this method he converted them all to his practice in the end. Bede very significantly says, in recording the success of Cuthbert's tactics, that he was a man of endless patience, and that it was impossible to tire him out in mind or body. With a chairman

possessed of unlimited patience, and with unlimited powers of adjournment, it is scarcely to be wondered at that in the long run his views prevailed.

One grievance the monks had which they seem to have persisted in cherishing. They had been accustomed to be free from all chance of being disturbed during their hours of sleep, whether at night or at noon, the latter being a general time of repose, as we find from more than one story in Cuthbert's life. Cuthbert rebuked them for their unwillingness to be disturbed when any sudden occasion arose, and for taking it ill when they were roused from sleep. For himself, he assured them that any one who awoke him did him a kindness, by enabling him to turn to something active and useful. Men with less power of existing without sleep might fairly have been excused, one might suppose, for not quite following Cuthbert in his precept and practice. He would spend three or four consecutive nights in watching and praying, neither going to his own bed in the common dormitory nor taking rest elsewhere. On such occasions he kept himself awake by singing or doing some handiwork, sometimes by walking round the island and observing everything on the way. And he had an uncomfortable habit of walking into the sea and standing all night with the water up to his neck. The monks of Lindisfarne not unnaturally drew the line a little below such discipline as this.

In another respect he practised a severity which it would appear that the monks up to his time had

not practised, and it is evident from Bede's manner of relating it, that monks in general did not practise it. Cuthbert would not wear garments of rich material or colour. His aim was to find a dress which should not attract attention either by its smartness or by its squalor. The example he set was no doubt enforced by orders issued in his capacity of abbat, and this may have been one of the points on which the opposition to his new rule rested. Seventy or eighty years later, the monks of Lindisfarne still continued to dress as Cuthbert had taught them to dress. They avoided all dyed and expensive material, and wore only wool of the natural colour.

The saint was by nature a recluse, though his sympathetic temperament drove him into active works of benevolence. It showed itself also in his dealings with sinners, for we are told that he often wept over those who were confessing to him their sins. And his feelings were so warm, and so ready to respond to any call upon them, that he seldom or never got through the service of the mass without shedding tears and losing command of his voice. When he came to the words "Sursum corda," "Lift up your hearts," he was so intent upon raising his own heart to God, so anxious that all present should do so, that he could not raise his voice, and he groaned rather than sang the words. After some years, his desire for the life of a recluse mastered all other feelings, and with the permission of Eata, and the blessing of the brethren, he retired to a remote part of the island. He very soon found that even

this place was not sufficiently withdrawn from the haunts of men. He determined on a very bold step. There was an island at some distance from Lindisfarne, not, like it, connected with the mainland at low water, but at all times an island surrounded by the sea, lying some eight miles off the coast. This was one of the Farne islands. It was not only not inhabited by man, it was said to be the abode of evil spirits. No one within the memory of tradition had ever lived on this island, till Cuthbert made his home there. On this desert place he made himself an abode in keeping with the surroundings. It was a circular house or hut, of considerable size, with a wall the height of a man or more. Within, the height of the wall seemed much greater, for Cuthbert had excavated the rock and so lowered the floor, his object being to make a house from which he could see nothing of the earth, only the heavens. The wall was built of the excavated materials, and the roof was made of rough timber and straw. The house was divided into two chambers, one an oratory, the other the apartment in which he lived. At the landing-place he built a large house, for the accommodation of such brethren as might visit him. Bede relates that angels assisted him to lift the heavy stones, and that wood and a perennial flow of fresh water were supplied by miracle.

In this hut he passed his days and nights. At first, he had a window open, through which he could be seen by visitors and could see them, but he soon closed this, and only opened it to give his blessing or

for some purpose of absolute necessity. Among other austerities, it is recorded that he kept on his shoes from one Easter to another, only taking them off then in order to join in the accustomed washing of feet at the Lord's supper at that season. Even his gaiters, made of skin, he did not take off for months at a time. He sowed wheat, declaring that he must not live on the labours of others; and when it would not grow, he sowed barley in its place, determining to return to the monastery if it in turn refused to grow. His determination was not put to the test, for an abundant crop appeared. When the barley was ripening, birds came and made great havoc among it, but he delivered a solemn address to them which rid him of their presence:—"If you have received licence from God, do as He allows you; if not, get you gone." This story he told himself. It was not the only occasion on which he showed his power over birds. There were crows on the island, and he detected them in making off with portions of his thatch to build their nests with. He warned them to desist, and when they disregarded the warning, he banished them. Three days after this he was digging in his field. A crow came and alighted at his feet. It spread out its wings, hung down its head, made sounds significant of humiliation, and demeaned itself with so much submission and propriety that the saint gave it leave to return to the island. It then flew off to fetch its mate, and they returned bearing on their beaks a lump of lard as a present to Cuthbert,—a fitting gift Bede calls it.

Cuthbert kept the lard for the double purpose of greasing the boots of the brethren and serving as a text for inculcating upon his visitors a lesson of submissive humility.

In the year 684 a great synod was held at Twyford, on the Alne. King Egfrid was there, and Archbishop Theodore presided. The business of the synod was the election of a bishop. The vast bishopric once held by Wilfrid, including the whole of Bernicia and Deira, had been divided into two on the expulsion of Wilfrid, when Bosa was made bishop of Deira, with his seat at York, and Eata bishop of Bernicia, with his seat at Hexham or at Lindisfarne. Three years later, Theodore added two more bishops; he made Trumwine bishop of the Picts north of the Clyde, who were at that time included in the kingdom of Northumbria, and Tunbert bishop of Hexham, Eata remaining bishop of Lindisfarne. Tunbert was in course of time deposed, and the synod at Twyford unanimously chose Cuthbert as bishop, to supply the vacancy caused in the episcopate. It was afterwards arranged that Eata should go to Hexham, and Cuthbert should be bishop of Lindisfarne. Even with this concession to Cuthbert they had great difficulty in persuading him to accept the bishopric. Messengers and letters from the synod were of no use; he would not leave his solitude and present himself before the assembly. Mahomet was obliged to go to the mountain. The king, with Bishop Trumwine and a party of great men and ecclesiastics, crossed over to the island. The brethren of the monastery in Lindis-

farne joined them, and they all knelt together before Cuthbert and begged him with tears to come to the synod. He gave way, and consented to be made bishop, chiefly moved by the fact that his old friend Boisil had prophesied that he would be a bishop.

The manner in which Cuthbert fulfilled his episcopal duties completely justified the choice of the synod. He taught with as much vigour as when he had visited the hamlets on the hills in the days of his youth. And, as Bede quaintly puts it, he did that which is the best assistance to a teacher, he practised what he preached. He saved the needy from the hand of the oppressor, and the poor man from him that would destroy him. He comforted the sad and the faint-hearted, and those whom he found unduly elated he brought down to a godly sorrow. In the midst of the bustle and pomp which surrounded him he retained his simple ways and monastic severity. He gave food to the hungry, clothing to the destitute. The miracles which he performed bare witness to his virtues. He is said to have possessed the gift of prophecy, in the form afterwards known as second-sight. Thus, when he visited Elfleda, abbess of the monastery on Coquet Isle, she adjured him in the most solemn way to tell her how long her brother Egfrid would reign. He told her in a somewhat vague and oracular manner that he had scarcely a year to live. She then pressed him to say who would succeed, for Egfrid had neither sons nor brothers. "Behold the sea," he said, "how full it is of islands. It is easy for God to provide

from the isles some one to reign over England." Then she remembered one Alfrid, who was supposed to be an illegitimate son of her father, and lived in studious retirement in the Scottish isles. Shortly after his accession to the bishopric, he made a journey to Lugubalia (Carlisle), "which the English incorrectly call Luel," Bede says. His intention was to visit the queen, who was there in her sister's monastery, awaiting the event of the invasion of the Picts by her husband. The people took Cuthbert to show him the walls of their city, and the fountain made in a remarkable manner by the Romans. As he stood by the well, he was suddenly disturbed in spirit. He groaned deeply, and said that the battle was over. He then went to the queen, and urged her to leave Carlisle for the royal city on the following Monday—it was then Saturday evening, and he told her it was unlawful to ride in a chariot on the Lord's Day—lest by chance it should prove that the king had been slain. It was found afterwards that the king was slain exactly at the time when Cuthbert was standing at the Roman well, and Alfrid succeeded him, in accordance with the saint's forecast. In the same spirit of prophecy he foretold the time of his own death, and also the fact that one Herebert, who lived a hermit's life on an island "in the great marshy lake from which the Derwent takes its rise," would die at the same time with him. On one occasion we have an incidental notice of that rapt expression of countenance which in later times has accompanied the exercise of second-sight. He was sitting at meat

with the above-mentioned Abbess Elfleda, for whom he was about to consecrate a church. Suddenly the colour of his face changed. His eyes became fixed. The knife dropped from his hand. His attendant priest bent down and whispered to the abbess that he must have seen something they had not seen. Addressing him as "my lord bishop," she asked him for what reason he had dropped his knife. He put off the question at first, but she persisted, and he told her he had seen the soul of a holy man carried up to heaven in the arms of angels. From whence was it carried? she asked. From her monastery. Whose soul was it? She would tell him that the next day when he was celebrating mass, he informed her. The next morning the body of a worthy shepherd was found under a tree from which he had fallen, and the abbess, on being informed of it, went to the bishop, who had already begun to consecrate the church, and begged him to remember in the mass her servant Hadwald. Thus all fell out as Cuthbert had foretold.

Cuthbert's miracles were some of them, as we have seen, wrought in his absence. There is one striking story of a miracle of this kind which will show us how fully the people of his time believed in his wonder-working power. It may show us also, if we accept it as it stands, how powerful over bodily disease is the influence and example of a firm faith. The prefect Hildemer, whose wife Cuthbert had cured, afterwards fell ill himself, and his life was despaired of. His friends were sitting round his bed,

consoling him as well as they were able, when one of them remarked that he had with him some blessed bread which Cuthbert had given him: "I believe," he added, "that unless the dulness of our faith hinder, the taste of this bread would cure our friend." They were all laymen, but of a reverential turn of mind; and the Saxons were by nature greatly given to a belief in the efficacy of amulets, and charms, and simples administered with pious words. They turned to one another and made a mutual confession of complete belief that by partaking of that blessed bread their friend could be cured. Then they filled a cup with water, put a little of the bread into it, and gave it to the sick man to drink. He drank, the internal pain ceased, and the wasting of the limbs disappeared. He was perfectly cured.

Cuthbert held ordinations at various places of his diocese. On one occasion we find him ordaining priests at Carlisle. He was diligent in performing the rite of Confirmation. When he cured the earl's wife with holy water he was on a Confirmation tour, as a bishop of these days would say, or, as Bede describes it, he was going through the rural districts, the homesteads, the villages, to lay hands on those who were recently baptized, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. At another time we hear of him visiting the outlying parts of his fold, and reaching a place among the hills where a large number of people were collected from all the villages round about, that he might lay his hands upon them. But there was no church among the hills, nor any place where the

bishop and his companions could be housed. The people set up tents for him, and for themselves they cut down branches and made booths. Thus lodged, the bishop preached and confirmed for two days. His short episcopate included the period of a dreadful pestilence; many villages and estates which had once been well-populated were almost or entirely cleared of inhabitants. Cuthbert diligently continued to visit his diocese under these circumstances, and exhorted and comforted the scanty remnants of the population.

After two years of an active episcopate, Cuthbert retired once more to his solitary island. He was asked when his people might hope to see him back again, and he answered, when they brought his body. About three months after this he died. Abbat Herefrid was with him at the last, and from him Bede learned all that occurred. When he was first taken ill, he sent away Herefrid and the party of monks who had come to visit him, bidding them bury him in his island of Farne: he was to be wrapped in linen which the Abbess Verca had given him, and laid in a coffin which he had received from Abbat Cudda. They were naturally very urgent that he should allow some of them to stay with him, but he was positive in his dismissal, and they obeyed. For five days they were prevented by bad weather from reaching the island, and when at last they did get there, they found him in a miserable state.[1] For five days and

[1] A paragraph in the *Newcastle Chronicle* (A.D. 1877) relating to the Farne Islands, may be quoted as an illustration of the

five nights he had not stirred from the seat to which he had gone when they left him, at a distance from his cell. He had supported life by gnawing an onion; he had a store of five onions, which he kept under his bed, and they found that he had only eaten about half of one of them. His legs, long swollen, were ulcerated. He was worn out with pain and want of food. From that time to the day of his death, about a fortnight, he allowed certain monks to stay with him, especially Herefrid and Bede major, not our historian, who was then a boy of

difficulties still attending a visit to the islands in tempestuous weather. "An important work—the erection of fog-signals—has been for some months in the course of construction at the Longstone, the scene of the famous deed of Grace Darling. The Messrs. Armstrong, of Alnwick, have the contract for the work, and by some misfortune the men on their return from home got to the island without their provisions, which were to follow them immediately, but continuous storms coming on, it was impossible to reach the rocky island, and the men were reduced to the greatest straits for want of food. The flag signals for flesh, flour, and water were hung out in vain. For a whole week they had to subsist upon three small 'ham shanks,' with hardly any meat upon them. One of the men, when attempting to shoot a Norwegian crow, nearly lost his life, the run of water among the rocks being so sudden and violent. At high water it would have been fatal to attempt to go beyond the rampart that surrounded the lighthouse, for the boiling surf was continually dashing over it. The workmen dried their tea-leaves and smoked them for tobacco. At last, on Christmas Day, by taking advantage of the wind, ten of them succeeded in reaching the inner Farne, where they obtained some refreshments. On the Sunday they had nothing to eat but a few crumbs of bread. They reached Alnwick on Friday last."

twelve or thirteen. The monks of Lindisfarne sent a deputation to him, entreating that he would allow himself to be buried in their church. The dying saint's answer was so curious that it is worth while to transcribe it in full. "I greatly wish to rest here, where I have fought some little fight for the Lord, where I desire to finish my course, whence I hope that the righteous Judge will take me to receive the crown of righteousness. And for you too it would be better that I should rest here, on account of the influx of fugitives and criminals to seek sanctuary at my grave. Humble as I am, they will seek this asylum, for the fame of me has gone forth that I am a servant of Christ. Thus you will often have to intercede for such with the great men of the world, and you will have much trouble in the matter." When at length their asseverations that labour of this kind would be pleasing to them induced him to yield, he gave a curious piece of advice, for which Bede says they thanked him on bended knee. "If you really do wish to take my body to Lindisfarne, I think you should bury it in the inner part of the church; for then you can visit the sepulchre yourselves whenever you wish, and you will have it in your power to grant or to withhold leave for others to visit it."

About nine o'clock one morning, when the brothers visited him, he asked them to carry him to his cell and oratory. When they reached the door, they asked if one of them might go in with him to wait upon him, for no one as yet had ever entered his

cell. He selected from among them one who was himself ill, Walstod by name, and these two spent six hours alone. At the end of that time, Walstod came out to tell Herefrid that Cuthbert wished to see him, and at the same time announced that he had himself been cured of his disease by the saint. Herefrid went to him at three o'clock, and found him reclining in one corner of the oratory, opposite the altar. He sat by his side, and entreated him to leave some last words of counsel for the brethren. Painfully and at intervals, for he was too ill to speak more than a few words at a time, the dying man said these words, as nearly as Herefrid could remember: "Keep peace among yourselves and divine love. When you meet in council, take earnest pains to be of one mind. Have mutual concord, too, with other servants of Christ. Despise none who come to you for hospitality and are of the household of faith, but receive them, keep them, and speed them on their way, with friendly kindness, not esteeming yourselves better than others of the same faith and life. But have no fellowship with those who err from the unity of the Catholic faith, either by keeping Easter at a wrong time or by living perversely. Know this, too, and keep it in memory, that if necessity compels you to choose between two evils, I greatly prefer that you should take my bones from the tomb and abandon this place, carrying them with you, than that you should in any way consent to submit to schismatics. Strive most diligently to learn and to keep the Catholic rules of the Fathers. Practise the rule which God

through my ministry has given you; for I know that, however some have despised me during my life, when I am dead you will see more clearly what manner of man I was, and that what I have taught is not to be despised."

Then he ceased to speak or think of this world. He passed the time till evening, and on into the night, in quiet and prayerful expectation of future bliss. Before the dawn of day he strengthened himself for his departure by the Communion of the Lord's Body and Blood. He raised his eyes and hands to heaven, and breathed out his soul. The brethren carried his body to the ship, and took it to Lindisfarne. There it was met by a great company of monks, with choirs of singers, and it was laid in the Church of St. Peter in a stone coffin, on the right side of the altar. Nine years later, when it was supposed that the flesh would be reduced to dust and the bones might be put into a smaller and more convenient receptacle, the coffin was opened, the monks obtaining the necessary permission from Bishop Eadbert, Cuthbert's successor. To their surprise they found the body unchanged, the joints still flexible. The clothing, too, was neither decayed nor faded. This was on the anniversary of his burial, the 20th of April. A fortnight later Bishop Eadbert himself died, and was buried below the coffin which contained Cuthbert's remains. The story of the many wanderings of this coffin with its precious relics belongs to a later period. Bede's bones were mingled with Cuthbert's, being found in the same tomb in 1104.

One more miracle we may tell of. After his death a boy was brought to the monastery in a cart by the parents, who did not know what to do with him. He was out of his mind, very noisy and violent; he yelled and bit, and would not be quiet. There is a remedy known to a few persons who are a good deal about horses, by which the most fractious horse can be brought to walk quietly past any object which he has altogether refused to pass. It is a simple remedy. Throw a little dust or mud off the road into his mouth, and the horse becomes at once so absorbed in the endeavour to expel all the dirt that he will walk quietly past anything. Perhaps this is a remedy dating from Saxon times; at any rate the remedy suggested by one of the priests in the monastery was very similar both in its compostion and in its effects. He went to the place where the water with which the dead saint's body was washed had been thrown, and he brought some of the mud to the sick-room of the monastery and poured it into the raging boy's open mouth, from which at the moment dreadful cries were issuing. The cries ceased instantly, the mouth was closed, the head fell back in a profound sleep; and the next morning the boy got up perfectly cured.

A relic of Cuthbert of very great interest and value exists still. When his tomb was opened in 1104 a copy of St. John's Gospel was found in it, a sixth century manuscript. It is now at Stonyhurst.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOMILIES OF BEDE.

THE Homilies of Bede which have been preserved are in one sense disappointing; they throw little or no light upon the state of society in his time. There is no approach to anything at all resembling the personal interest of which the sermons of Chrysostom are so full. There is no rebuking of notorious sinners, no sarcastic scourging of fashionable follies and vices. The reason of this is obvious, even if we overlook the difference between the two men. Chrysostom preached in a great metropolis, full of luxury and dissipation. Bede read theological lectures in a quiet monastery, where he seems to have had no vices to rebuke, or where, if vices there were, he rebuked them tenderly in private. His Homilies reflect the quietness and confidence of the faithful Christian student, addressing a body of his brethren in good works and in a God-fearing life.

Like others of the early preachers, he supports his statements with texts of Scripture more often than is usual in the present time. The Bible was less familiar to ordinary people then than it is now. There was instruction in Christianity to be found in the quotation of texts possibly novel to some hearers. Many points of doctrine were much less assured

then ; they needed support from every quarter where it could be found, and no support was so good as that which was derived from apposite texts of Scripture.

There is a singular absence of rhetorical attempts in these Homilies. It would seem never to have been Bede's intention to work upon the feelings of his hearers by impassioned words. He said what he meant to say clearly and simply, and he left it to its own inherent force to make its way. It would be difficult to find, in the sermons of Bede, passages dwelling in vehement terms upon the horrors of hell and the happiness of heaven. Threats and profuse promises are no more parts of his teaching than are invective and sarcasm parts of his style.

As a rule, Bede took a passage of some considerable length,—one of the lessons for the day, for example, and went through it verse by verse, expounding rather than preaching. He frequently insisted upon the special doctrines which centre round the Incarnation, such as the two natures of Christ, and upon the relation of the Persons in the Blessed Trinity. Such themes suited him better than the more practical subjects which are fitted for those who are conversant with the world and have a mixed and secular congregation to address. It is to be feared that many of Bede's sermons would be stigmatized in these days as "doctrinal," or, by those who say more distinctly what they mean, as "dull."

There is very little indeed of criticism of the text in Bede's sermons. He takes it as he finds it, and he expounds it. This is only what might be ex-

pected in those early days; but from a theological student and scholar like Bede we might, perhaps, have expected more reference to the Greek text and to the manner in which the Latin text in use represented it. In some cases where the Greek has a special emphasis which the Latin has not, Bede's remarks take no account of the emphasis in the original. As an example of his textual criticism—there are very few indeed to be found in his sermons—the passage "He came into the parts of Dalmanutha" may be cited. On this Bede remarks that St. Matthew has "Magdala." He thinks that the same place is intended by both evangelists, for "many codices" have "Magedan" in St. Mark instead of "Dalmanutha." It may be noticed as typical of Bede's method of preaching that he makes no point of the emphatic *ye* in John iii. 7, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, *ye* must be born again," though the emphasis of the word is brought out in the Latin text as well as in the Greek original.

Bede's method as a commentator[1] was very different from his method as a preacher. In these days of critical study of the Holy Scriptures in the original languages, it is interesting to observe the manner in which he used the Greek of the New Testament in writing his commentaries. The Bible which was in the hands of his readers and hearers was of course the Latin Bible. Bede did not treat this as later writers treated it, as being sufficient in itself. He

[1] His commentaries on the Old Testament fill 1338 octavo pages, and those on the New Testament 1250.

was careful to point out omissions, and to warn his readers against mistranslations into which the Latin might lead them if they were not warned. Thus, to take half a chapter as an example, on Acts ii. 20,[1] "the sun shall be turned into darkness," he tells them that though the Latin might suggest "darknesses," it was only because the Latin word had no proper singular; the Greek word, which he gives in his commentary, shows that the correct translation is "darkness." On Acts ii. 23, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken," where the Latin omits "ye have taken," he informs his readers that a very important word is omitted in their Latin version, very important because the Jews had the choice between the robber and Jesus, and they *took* Him. Again, in the 30th verse of the same chapter, "that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne," where the Latin omits "according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ," he points out that there is more in the Greek than in the Latin, and tells them what should be added. Similarly in verses 33 and 34 he notes differences between the Latin and the Greek. On verse 41 he remarks that while the Latin text on which he was commenting seemed to

[1] The uncial MS. of the Acts known as E is believed to have been the actual manuscript used by Bede. It has a Latin rendering (not the Vulgate) in addition to the Greek text. It was given to the University of Oxford by Archbishop Laud, whence its name *Laudiensis*.

say that all who gladly received the word were baptized, another manuscript gave more correctly the true force of the Greek, limiting the statement to the particular individuals who heard the word on that occasion.

On one point Bede was very careful to warn the readers of his commentaries, as careful as a member of the New Testament Revision Company could be. He constantly pointed out the ambiguities caused by the want of an article in the Latin. Thus on Acts i. 6, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" the Latin gives no hint to enable a reader to determine whether he shall translate it "restore the kingdom of Israel," or "restore the kingdom to Israel." Bede tells his readers that the Greek article decides the question in favour of the latter. Similarly in the 14th verse of the same chapter, "Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brethren," the Latin leaves it open to any one to translate, "and her brethren," against which translation Bede gives a warning. And so, too, to take one more example from the same part of the Scripture, in Acts ii. 3, "there appeared unto them cloven tongues, as of fire," the Latin may be rendered "cloven tongues, as it were fire," where Bede informs them that in the Greek there is no ambiguity, the form of the genitive being different from that of the nominative, whereas in the Latin they are the same. An instance of another kind is found in the next verse, "began to speak in other tongues"; here the Latin has "in various tongues," but Bede cor-

rects the translation, and says that it should be "other." From these numerous examples, taken from so small a portion of Scripture, it may be imagined how careful and close was Bede's study of his manuscripts. We feel that we are in the hands of a man who, at least so far as the desire to be accurate is concerned, may be trusted either as a commentator or as a historian.

He speaks in terms of the highest respect of the Virgin Mary, as blessed above all women. But he goes no further than that. His manner of speaking of her may be gathered from a remark which he makes in preaching on one of the festivals in her honour. A most excellent and salutary practice, he says, has long been established in the Church, that her hymn (he is speaking of the *Magnificat*) is sung by all every day at vespers. The object and use of this practice he believes to be that the continual commemoration of our Lord's Incarnation may incite us to deeper devotion, and the recollection of the example set by His mother may strengthen us in virtue. He is careful to explain that the expression "first-born son"—"she brought forth her first-born son"—in no way implies that there were other children born later; and he maintains the theory of the perpetual virginity of the Virgin Mary so strenuously that he prays God to avert from his hearers the blasphemy of holding otherwise. Of "Mariolatry" there is no sign in Bede's Homilies. In the Ecclesiastical History, Bede relates that Bishop Wilfrid was told by the archangel Michael, in a vision, that

the prayers of his disciples and the intercession of the Virgin Mary had moved the Lord to grant Wilfrid a recovery from a dangerous illness.

There are frequent references to the two great Sacraments of Christ, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. But there is a rather marked absence of any homily on one or other of these subjects specially. It would have been very interesting, and it might have been instructive, to read what Bede thought and taught in detail on these cardinal points of Christian faith and practice. His method of homiletic exposition was such that his views were stated rather incidentally and in passing, than in any very full and formal manner: we find nothing like an elaborate treatise on these and similar points. His mention of the validity of Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, by whomsoever administered, is a good example of this. He is preaching on the visit of Nicodemus to Christ, and in commenting on the words of the master in Israel, "How can a man be born when he is old?" he remarks that the same is true of spiritual birth, a man cannot be born again. "No one who has been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, even though by a heretic, a schismatic, or an evil person, may be rebaptized by good Catholics, lest the invocation of so great a name be annulled."[1] Passing allusions to the necessity of Baptism will be mentioned when we come to speak

[1] See Bede's account of Bishop John of Hexham rebaptizing a man who had been catechised and baptized by an ignorant priest, p. 174.

of Bede's figurative interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan, and of the miracle of the Four Thousand. In another place, speaking on the words of St. Mark vii. 33, "He spit, and touched his tongue," &c., Bede says that from this passage a custom prevalent in his time grew up, the priests touching in like manner the nostrils and ears of those whom they were about to present for Baptism, saying at the same time the word Ephphatha. The touching of the nostrils he understood to be a sign that thence-forward they should be a "sweet savour of Christ" (2 Cor. ii. 15); and he urges all who had received the rite of consecration by Baptism, and all who were about to receive it at the forthcoming season of Easter, to avoid all occasion of falling back into that from which Baptism washed them. In this passage he speaks at some length on the subject of Baptism, and its cleansing power, and it is perhaps rather remarkable that he makes no reference to the question of original sin. In another homily he repeats his reference to the practice of baptizing at Easter; "rightly do we on this night"—the commencement of the festival of Easter—"hallow to the one true God in the font of regeneration the new people of His adoption brought out of the spiritual Egypt."

To the Sacrament of the Supper of the Lord the references in the Homilies are frequent and most reverential. English readers not familiar with the early names of things must not be surprised to find that Bede uses the ordinary name *Missa*, the Latin word for *Mass*, to describe the celebration of this

Sacrament. In King Alfred's time, "mass-priest" was the accepted designation of officiating clergy in Priests' Orders. In speaking of this Sacrament, Bede uses stronger expressions than he might have done had he known what controversies would rage round almost every word that could be used in connection with it. He uses words well known in Eucharistic controversy, to a greater extent than he uses controversial words in speaking of Baptism. And the reason for this is clear. Our Lord Himself used words as strong as any that can be used when He said, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," and any language framed on these two statements must seem strong, however free it may be in fact and in intention from any element of superstition. This is not true of the language used in baptismal controversy. But while it is true that Bede uses words which a cautious writer of the present day might avoid using in public utterances, because of the misconceptions to which his use of them might possibly give rise, it is at least as true that we search in vain for any sign of a belief on Bede's part in the doctrine of transubstantiation. It is so well known that transubstantiation did not appear as a doctrine till long after Bede's time, that it may seem unnecessary to remark that no sign of it is found in Bede. Since, however, some of his expressions have a recognised force in modern controversy, it is not out of place to preface a mention of them by some such caution.

In the passage quoted above from Bede's Homily on the Eve of the Resurrection, after mentioning the

Easter rite of baptism, he proceeds as follows:—"and rightly we celebrate the solemn mass, we offer to God for the advance of our salvation the holy Body and precious Blood of our Lamb, by whom we have been redeemed from our sins." And in another place, speaking of the "manger" of Bethlehem, he says, "He chose the manger, to which animals came to feed, as His resting-place, foreshadowing the refreshing of all the faithful, by the mysteries of His Incarnation, on the table of the holy altar." These are the words of a man who had not been taught by sad experience what mischief may be supposed to lurk under harmless expressions when once they have been appropriated by one side or another in a controversy. Against them we may set such words of his as the following, words which no one who held the views afterwards known as the doctrine of transubstantiation could have used: "The time of our Passover is at hand. Let us come holy to the Altar of the Lord, not to eat the flesh of a lamb, but to receive the sacred mysteries of our Redeemer. Let no one who abides still in death presume to receive the mysteries of life. Let us pray that He may deign to come to our feast, to illumine us with His presence, to hallow His own gifts to us." And in another passage he tells his hearers that the sacrifices under the new covenant are spiritual:—"The two altars in the Temple signify the two covenants. The first was the altar of burnt-offerings, covered with brass, for offering victims and sacrifices. This was the Old Covenant. The second was at the

entrance of the Holy of Holies, covered with gold, for burning incense. This was the inward and more perfect grace of the New Covenant." Something to the same effect is a passage on the priesthood after the order of Melchisedech :—"Melchisedech, a priest of the most high God, offered to God bread and wine long before the times of the priesthood of the Law. And our Redeemer is called a Priest after the order of Melchisedech, because after the priesthood of the Law had come to an end, He established a similar sacrifice by offering the mystery of His Body and Blood." Again, in preaching on the words, "*Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*," in conjunction with the verse from the Apocalypse, "*Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood*," Bede speaks in words which set his views before us in a clear and satisfactory manner. "He washed us from our sins in His blood, not only when He gave His blood on the cross for us, or when each one of us by the mystery of His holy Passion was washed clean by baptism of water, but He also daily takes away the sins of the world. He washes us from our sins daily in His Blood, when the memory of the same blessed Passion is renewed at the altar, when the creature of bread and wine is transferred into the sacrament of His flesh and blood by the ineffable sanctification of the Spirit; and thus His Flesh and Blood is not poured and slain by the hands of unbelievers to their own destruction, but is taken by the mouth of believers to their own salvation. The paschal lamb in the

Law rightly shows forth the figure of this, the lamb which once freed the people from their Egyptian slavery, and in memory of that freeing was wont year by year to sanctify by its offering the same people, until He should come to whom such a victim bare witness; and being offered to the Father for us as a victim and a sweet-smelling savour, after He had offered the lamb, He transferred to the creature of bread and wine the mystery of His Passion, being made a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech."

It may be worth while to quote on this point the words of a learned divine who presided over the Anglo-Saxon Church two centuries and a half after Bede's death, Ælfric, Archbishop of Canterbury. "When the Lord said, *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life*, He bade not His disciples to eat the Body wherewith He was enclosed nor to drink that Blood which He shed for us; but He meant that holy morsel which is in a ghostly way His Body and Blood; and he that tasteth it with believing heart hath everlasting life." Thus it would appear that neither early nor late in the history of the Church of England in Saxon times were erroneous views held by the chief divines on this cardinal point of Christian doctrine.

It has already been remarked that there is very little indeed of personal allusion in Bede's sermons. There is not, however, an entire absence of such allusion. In a remarkable sermon on the text, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, . . . shall receive an hundredfold," Bede refers to the high

esteem in which those who professed the religious life were held by those who remained in the world, so that they actually did receive much more than they surrendered when they gave up their property and worldly prospects. The "hundred" he takes to be not a mere numeral but the symbol of perfection. He who gives up human possessions and affections will find an abundance of the faithful eager to receive him, to put their houses and goods at his disposal, to love him with a more perfect affection than wife or mother or child. He reminded those whom he addressed that they had practical proof of this. When they passed on rare occasions beyond the bounds of the monastery, they found welcome and support wherever they went. In another homily he speaks of the use of the intellect in a manner which shows how highly he estimated intellectual gifts, and how seriously he felt that he himself devoted to God the hours of study. The text was, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business," or, as Bede completed the expression left indefinite in the Greek, "in my Father's house." This, Bede says, refers not only to the material temple in which Christ was, but also to that temple of the intellect in which He was exercising Himself when He heard the doctors and asked them questions, a temple constructed for the eternal praise of God.

We find Bede's views on what was afterwards changed into the doctrine of Extreme Unction, in his remarks on the Epistle of James, v. 14–20. The Gospels, he says, show us that the Apostles acted as

Christians are there bidden to act. In his own time, the custom prevailed that sick men were anointed with oil by the priests, with prayer accompanying, that they might be healed. As Pope Innocent had written, not priests only but any Christians might use the oil for this purpose, in their own or their relations' need. But only bishops might make the oil, for the words "anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" implied two things, the one that the name of the Lord was to be invoked when the oil was used, the other that the oil was to be "oil in the name of the Lord," *i. e.* made and consecrated in the name of the Lord. Of Confession he proceeds to say that many are in sickness and near death because of their sins. If such confess to the priests of the Church, and earnestly set about to amend, their sins shall be dismissed.

The views of Bede's time, and of Bede himself, on Purgatory, are clearly given in the account of a vision in the Fifth Book of the Ecclesiastical History. We have already seen in the life of Benedict Biscop some parts of this vision[1], but we have not seen all. In addition to the valley one side whereof was burning heat and the other was piercing cold, and to the flaming pit, the place of torment, the man to whom the vision or trance was vouchsafed saw also the abodes of blessedness of two degrees. After passing the place of utmost torment, his guide and he came to a wall whose height and length were infinite. Presently, by what means he knew not, they were on the top of the wall. At their feet lay a vast and

[1] See pages 86 and 87.

joyous plain, full of so sweet a fragrance of vernal flowers as drove away the vile odours of the pit with which his senses had been impregnated. The light was clearer than the day, more splendid than the sun. On the plain were innumerable congregations of white-robed men, and crowds seated by companies rejoicing. Not unnaturally he thought within himself that these were the plains of Heaven. But his companion, knowing his thoughts, answered him, "Not this is the Kingdom of Heaven."

And then, as he moved on, there dawned upon him a yet fairer and more splendid effulgence, from out of which proceeded the sweetest strains of singers and a fragrancy so marvellous as far to transcend the exquisite fragrance of the former abode. His guide allowed him but to perceive these heavenly delights and then led him back to the lesser degree of bliss. Standing there, he expounded to him what he had seen. The valley of overpowering heat and cold was the place where the souls of those were tried and punished who had delayed to confess their sins and amend their lives, but who, having at the last moment confessed and repented, should enter into the kingdom of heaven at the day of judgment. Many of these, the guide declared, were so aided by the prayers and alms and fastings of living men, and especially by masses, that they would be released even before the day of judgment. The flowery plain on which he had seen the happy bands of youth bright and fair, this was the place to which the souls of those were sent, who dying in good works, were yet not sufficiently perfect

to pass at once to the plains of Heaven. At the day of judgment, they would pass to the higher glory.

It will be seen that while the latter class of souls represented men whose lives had been almost perfect, even those who were tormented in the valley had repented before death. For those who died without repentance, there was no hope from prayers or alms or fasting, not even from masses. A similar lesson is taught by another striking vision of which Bede tells. When Bede was about thirty years of age, there was in Mercia a man high in the military service of King Coenred, but he was a man of evil life. When he was very ill, indeed on his death-bed, the king came to exhort him to repent. The unhappy man said that he would amend his life if he recovered, but his companions should never have it to say that he repented under the fear of death. The king came to him again when he was much worse, and again exhorted him. It was too late, the dying man cried; he had seen a vision, and it was too late. There had come into his room two youths very fair to look upon; the one sat down at his head, the other at his feet. They produced a little book, very beautiful, but exceedingly small, and gave it him to read. He found written therein all the good deeds he had done; and behold they were very few and inconsiderable. They took back the book, and spake never a word. Then on a sudden there rushed in an army of malignant spirits, horrid to see, and they filled the whole house where he was. One among them, who seemed to be chief in horror and in place, brought out a book of

terrible appearance and intolerable heaviness, and bade a satellite give it to the dying man to read. Therein was written, alas, all that ever he had done ill, in word or deed or thought. Then the prince of the demons said to the white-robed youths who sat at the head and the foot of the victim, "Why do ye sit here, whereas ye know of a surety that the man is ours?" And they said, "It is true; take him and cast him on to the heap of your damnation"; and having so said, they departed. Then there arose two of the worst spirits, having forks in their hands, and they struck him, the one in the head and the other in the feet. Such was the vision, but the wounds, the desperate man said, were real; they were spreading to meet one another in the midst of his body; and so soon as they should meet he would die, and the demons were at hand to drag him to hell. On which Bede, writing five-and-twenty years after, remarks, that the sinner was now suffering without avail in eternal torments that penance which he had refused to suffer for a brief period with its fruit unto forgiveness of sins.

The feature in Bede's Homilies which would probably seem the most prominent to a reader not very familiar with early compositions of the kind, is the somewhat far-fetched figurative interpretation in which he constantly indulges his imagination. To take first an instance of such interpretation which bears on a singular charge of heresy brought against him. The six water-pots at the marriage in Cana of Galilee were the six ages of the world down to the

first showing forth of our Lord's divinity. The first was the age of Abel; the second commenced with the Flood; the third with the call of Abraham; the fourth with David; the fifth was the Captivity; the sixth was the birth of our Lord, His circumcision, presentation, and subjection to His parents. In connection with this subject Bede wrote a treatise, "On the Ages of the World." In an epistle to Plegwin, he refers to the charge of heresy of which mention has been made. Plegwin's messenger had come to him with pleasant greetings, but he had reported one dreadful thing, namely, that Plegwin had heard that Bede was sung among heretics by wanton rustics in their cups. Bede confesses that he was horrorstruck on hearing this. He turned pale. He asked, of what heresy was he thus accused. The messenger replied, "that Christ had not come in the flesh in the sixth age of the world." He breathed again. That Christ had come in the flesh no priest of Christ's Church could be supposed to have denied. That He came in the sixth age was another matter, and Bede traced the report to one of Plegwin's monks to whom he had shown his book, "On the Ages of the World." In this book he made it clear that the fifth age ended with the Incarnation, with which also the sixth began. Thus the question to which of the two ages the Incarnation was to be assigned might be resolved in either way. He had himself assigned it to the sixth age, both in the book and in a homily, so that the report was a calumny. What a curious picture of the age is this singing of

heretics by rustics in their cups. It may remind us of the use made of popular songs by Arius in spreading his views and discrediting his orthodox opponents.

That conjugal chastity is good, widowed continence better, virgin perfection best of all, Bede proves as follows, apparently on the assumption that those things which are symbolized by the earliest parts of our Lord's life on earth are more holy than those symbolized by parts more remote from His birth. "Jesus was born of a virgin; therefore virgin perfection is best of all. He was soon afterwards blessed by a widow; therefore widowed continence is next after virgin perfection. Later in His life He was present at a marriage feast; therefore conjugal chastity comes third only in order of merit."

In his Homily on the Feeding the Four Thousand, he remarks that the seven baskets signified the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit. And he proceeds to say that baskets made of rushes and palm-leaves were employed, to signify that as the rush has its roots in water, so the Christian is rooted in the fountain of life; and as the palm-leaf is the symbol of a conqueror, so the Christian is a conqueror, and more than a conqueror. The two fishes were added to show by means of these creatures of the water that without the water of Baptism man cannot live.

The parable of the good Samaritan affords as good an example as any of Bede's figurative interpretations. The "certain man" is the human race in Adam. "Jerusalem" is the heavenly city of peace, from

which Adam went down to "Jericho," that word (meaning "the moon," according to some early commentators) signifying the world with its changes and its wanderings. The "thieves" were the devil and his angels, who stripped him by taking from him the glory of immortality and the garb of innocence. His wounds were the blows of sin. He was left only "half dead," because while man was deprived of the gift of eternal life, there yet was left him sense to discern God. The Priest and Levite were the priesthood and ministry of the Old Covenant. The Samaritan, or "guardian"—Samaria is supposed to have taken its name from its admirable position as a place of observation, or watch-tower—was the Lord Jesus. Binding up the wounds was restraining the sins of men. Pouring in oil was saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"; pouring in wine was saying "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down." The beast of burden was the flesh in which He deigned to come to us. The inn was the Church on earth, where pilgrims are refreshed on their way to heaven; the bringing to the inn is Baptism. The "next day" is after the resurrection of the Lord. The two pence are the two Testaments, said to be given to the innkeeper then, because then it was that He opened their eyes that they understood the Scriptures. The innkeeper had something over—"whatsoever thou spendest more"—which he did not receive in the two pence, something beyond the requirements of the two Testaments. This Bede illustrates by such passages as "Now concerning

virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, yet I give my judgment"; and again, "The Lord hath ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel; but I have used none of these things." To those who obeyed these "counsels of perfection," who did more in such matters than the Scriptures actually required them to do, the debtor would come again, and would pay them, when the Lord came and said, "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The Homilies contain incidental allusions which throw light upon some of the ceremonies of the time. In this way, for example, we learn that for the anniversary of the dedication day of the church of Jarrow, they adorned the walls of the church, increased the number of lights and of lections and the amount of singing, and passed the previous night in joyful vigils.

The best means of giving the English reader an idea of a sermon to an educated audience in England in Bede's time, will be to reproduce one of his Homilies entire in an English dress.

CHAPTER IX.

A SERMON BY BEDE.

A LARGE number of sermons, written by Bede, or at least attributed to him, have been preserved. Many of these are certainly not Bede's, but there are fifty or sixty which may fairly be taken as his. They were not intended for a mixed congregation, being addressed to his brethren in the monastery. They consist for the most part of a running exposition of passages of Scripture, seldom elaborated and almost invariably brief. On one occasion he apologises for having preached a long sermon; but the sermon in which the apology occurs could be read without any haste in twenty-eight minutes. The sermon of which a translation is now given, as a specimen of the most practical of Bede's sermons, would take about eighteen minutes to deliver in the Latin, reading slowly.

The occasion of the sermon selected to illustrate Bede's homiletic style was the Nativity of St. Peter and St. Paul. The passages of Scripture chosen for comment were the parallel passages, St. Matthew xvi. 13–19; St. Mark viii. 27–29; St. Luke ix. 18–20; being the passages containing the promise to Peter—"Thou art Peter," &c. The sermon itself is as follows.

The holy Gospel which has been read to you, my brethren, is worthy of your utmost attention, and should be kept in constant remembrance. For it commends to us perfect faith, and shows the strength of such perfect faith against all temptations. If you would know how one ought to believe in Christ, what can be more clear than this which Peter says to Him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"? If you would hear of what avail is this belief, what can be more plain than this which the Lord says of the Church to be builded upon Him, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it"? These points will be more fully considered hereafter, each in its own place. I will now proceed to the explanation of the whole passage, taking the sentences in their natural order.

And first, of the place in which the Lord's words were spoken. "*Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi.*" Philip, as Luke informs us, was tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis. He built a city in the district where the Jordan rises, at the foot of Mount Lebanon, a district which bounds Judea towards the north, and he named it Cæsarea Philippi, after his own name, and at the same time in honour of Tiberius Cæsar, under whom he governed the country.

"*Jesus asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*" He does not ask as though He knew not what His disciples and others thought of Him. He questions the disciples as to their opinion, in order that He may worthily reward

their confession of a true faith. For as, when all were questioned, Peter alone answered for all, so what the Lord answered to Peter, in Peter He answered to all. And He asks what others think of Him, in order that the erroneous opinions of others might be exposed, and so it would be shown that the disciples received the truth of their confession not from the common belief, but from the very secrets of revelation from the Lord. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" He asks. Right well does He call them "men" who spoke of Him only as Son of Man, because they knew not the secrets of His Divinity. For they who can receive the mysteries of His Divinity are deservedly said to be more than men. The Apostle (Paul) himself beareth witness, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And having premised this of men, that is, of those whose knowledge is from the human heart, the human ear, the human eye, the Apostle presently adds, of himself and of those like him who surpassed the ordinary knowledge of the human race, "but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." In the same way here, when the Lord had questioned the disciples as to whom men held Him to be, and they had stated the different views of different persons, He says to them—

"*But whom do ye say that I am?*" as though setting them apart from ordinary men, and implying that they were made gods and sons of God by adop-

tion, according to that saying of the Psalmist, "I have said, Ye are gods, and ye are all the children of the Most Highest."

"*Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" He calls Him the "living" God by way of distinction from the false gods which heathendom in its various delusions made to itself to worship, either of dead men, or—greater folly still—of insensate matter. Of which false gods it is sung in the Psalm, "their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands." And mark well, my beloved, for it is worthy of all admiration, how, when the true view of both the natures of the same Lord our Saviour is to be expressed, it is the Lord who sets forth the humility of the manhood He had taken upon Him, the disciple who shows the excellency of the divine eternity. The Lord says of Himself that which is the less, the disciple says of the Lord that which is the greater. So, too, in the Gospel, the Lord was accustomed to speak of Himself much more often as Son of Man than as Son of God, that He might admonish us of the dispensation which He undertook for us. And we ought the more humbly to reverence the high things of His divinity, the more we remember that for our exaltation He descended to the low estate of manhood. For if among the mysteries of the Incarnation, by which we have been redeemed, we cherish always in pious memory the power of the divinity by which we have been created, we too with Peter are rewarded with blessing from on high. For when Peter confesses Him to be

the Christ, the Son of the living God, see what follows :—

"*Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona.*" It is certain, then, that after true confession of Christ there remain the true rewards of blessedness. Let us now consider attentively what and how great is that name with which He glorifies the perfect confessor of His name, that by a true confession we may deserve to be partakers of this also. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona." Bar-Jona in Syriac signifies son of a dove. And rightly is the Apostle Peter called Son of a Dove, for the dove is without guile, and Peter followed his Lord in prudent and pious guilelessness, mindful of that precept of guilelessness and truth which he and his fellow-disciples received from the same Master—"Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." And surely, since the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord in the form of a dove, he is rightly called "Son of a Dove" who is shown to have been filled with the grace of the Spirit. And justly does the Lord reward him who loved Him and confessed Him, by declaring that he, who asserted Him to be Son of the living God, is son of the Holy Spirit. Of course no faithful man doubts that these two sonships are very different. For the Lord Christ is Son of God by nature: Peter, as also the other elect, son of the Holy Spirit by grace. Christ is Son of the living God, because He is born of Him: Peter is son of the Holy Spirit, because he is born again of Him. Christ is Son of God before all time, for He is that

virtue of God and wisdom of God which saith, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old." Peter is son of the Holy Spirit from the time when, illumined by Him, he received the grace of divine knowledge. And because the will of the Holy Trinity is one, and the operation one, when the Lord had said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona," that is, son of the grace of the Spirit, He rightly proceeded to say—

"*For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but my Father which is in Heaven.*" It was indeed the Father who revealed it: for the grace of the Father and of the Holy Spirit is one, as also that of the Son, which may be proved very easily from sacred Scripture. For the Apostle says of the Father, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." The Son Himself says of the Holy Spirit, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father." The Apostle says of the Holy Spirit, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." The Father therefore sends the Spirit, the Son sends the Spirit: the Spirit Himself breatheth where He listeth, because, as we have said, the will and the operation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one. And hence it is fittingly said, that the Father which is in heaven revealed to the Son of the Dove that mystery of faith which flesh and blood could not reveal. Now flesh and blood we rightly understand to mean men puffed up with the wisdom of the flesh, ignorant of the guilelessness

of the dove, and thus as far as possible removed from the wisdom of the Spirit. Of whom it has been said above, that in their ignorance of Christ some said that He was John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. Of such men the Apostle saith: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

To proceed. "*And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.*" Peter, who was before named Simon, received from the Lord the name of Peter on account of the strength of his faith and the constancy of his confession; for his mind clung firmly to That of which it is written, "that rock was Christ." "And upon this rock;" that is, upon the Lord and Saviour who gave to him that knew Him, loved Him, confessed Him, a share in His own name, so that from the Rock he should be called Peter; on which Rock the Church is builded, because only by believing and loving Christ, by receiving the Sacraments of Christ, by observing the commandments of Christ, can man arrive at the lot of the elect, at eternal life. To this the Apostle beareth witness when he saith, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

"*And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*" The gates of Hell are wicked doctrines, which seduce men and bring them to Hell. The gates of Hell, further, are the tortures and the blandishments of persecutors, who by terrifying and enticing unstable souls, open unto them an entrance into eternal death.

Further, the gates of Hell are the evil deeds and the unseemly words of believers, inasmuch as they show the way of perdition to those who allow them or follow their example. For even faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself, and evil communications corrupt good manners. Many, then, are the gates of Hell; but not one of them prevails against the Church which is builded on the Rock: for one who has received the faith of Christ with the inmost love of his heart, easily puts down every temptation from without. But a believer who has depraved and betrayed his belief, either by wrongdoing or by denial, is to be taken as having built the house of his confession, not on a rock with the Lord as his helper, but on sand with no foundation: that is, he must be held to have made pretence of being a Christian, with no simple and true determination to follow Christ, but with some frail, earthly purpose.

"*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.*" He who confessed the King of Heaven with a devotion beyond that of others, had worthily conferred upon him beyond others the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; that all might know, how that without such confession and faith none may enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And He describes, as "the keys of the kingdom of Heaven," that knowledge and power of discerning by which the worthy would be received into the kingdom, the unworthy rejected. It is evidently on this account that He added:

"*And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on*

earth shall be loosed in Heaven." This power of binding and of loosing seems to be given by the Lord to Peter alone; but without the slightest doubt it is given to the other Apostles also. Christ Himself bears witness to this, for after the triumph of His Passion and Resurrection He appeared to them, and breathing on them said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."[1] Nay, the same function is committed now, in the person of the bishops and priests, to the whole Church, so that after knowledge of the case of sinners it may take pity on those whom it sees to be humble and truly penitent, and absolve them from the fear of eternal death; while it marks as bound under everlasting punishments those whom it finds to be persistent in their sins. Whence in another place the Lord says of one who is once and again taken in a fault and yet repenteth not,—"But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen

[1] In another passage Bede discusses the relative position of Peter and the chief Apostles. He remarks, that though Peter is named first in the catalogues of the Apostles, Paul says, "James, Cephas, and John," and that the order of the Catholic Epistles is the same. The reason for this order he understands to be that James ruled in Jerusalem, the fountain-head of the Church; also, James wrote to the tribes from whom the first believers came, Peter to the Gentile proselytes, the next believers, and John to the Gentiles who were not proselytes, the third class of believers in order of time. Bede could scarcely have said more than he does had he foreseen the claims which later ages would make in Peter's name.

man and a publican." And lest any should deem it a light thing to be condemned by the judgment of the Church, He adds presently these terrible words, "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." To the whole Church, then, of the elect is there given authority to bind and loose according to the measure of sins and of repentance. But the blessed Peter, who confessed Christ with a true faith, and followed Him with a true love, received in a special manner the keys of the kingdom of Heaven and the first place of the power of judgment; in order that all believers throughout the world may understand that no man who in any way separates himself from the unity of faith and fellowship can be absolved from the chains of sin or enter the gate of the kingdom of Heaven.[1] So that, my dearest brethren, we must of necessity learn with the utmost care the sacraments of the faith which he taught, and show forth works meet for faith. We must with all vigilance beware of the manifold and subtle snares of the gates of Hell, that so we may be worthy to enter into the gates of the daughter of Sion, that is, into the joys of the city which is on high. And let us not suppose that it

[1] In another sermon Bede expounds our Lord's words as follows:—Thou art Peter, and on this rock from which thou hast received thy name, that is, on Myself, I will build My Church; on this perfection of faith which thou hast confessed I will build My Church, and whosoever departeth from the fellowship of this confession belongeth not to My Church.

suffices for salvation that we be like unto the crowds of careless and ignorant persons in faith or in deeds, for there is in the sacred writings one only rule laid down for faith and life. But as often as the examples of those who err are brought before us, let us turn away the eyes of our mind lest they behold vanity, and carefully investigate what truth itself teaches. Let us follow the example of the blessed Peter, who rejected the errors of others, and made with the mouth an unwavering profession of the hidden things of the true faith which he had learned, and kept them in his heart with invincible care. For in this place we learn of the faithfulness of confession; while of the virtue of single love for Christ He beareth witness Himself in another place, when some of His disciples went back, and He said unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" "Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the son of the living God." If we set ourselves to follow his example, my brethren, according to our ability, we too shall be able with him to be called blessed and to be blessed; to us, too, the name of Simon will be meet, that is, of one that obeys Christ; we too, on account of the guilelessness of our faith that is not feigned, and the grace we receive from the Lord, shall be called sons of the virtues of the dove; and He Himself, rejoicing with us in the spiritual progress of our soul, shall say, "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast dove's eyes." And so it cometh to

pass that if we build on the rock of faith, gold, silver, precious stones, that is, the perfect works of virtues, the fires of tribulation shall bring no harm, the storms of temptation shall not prevail. Nay, rather, proved by adversity, we shall receive the crown of life, promised before the ages by Him who liveth and reigneth God, with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER X.

PRESAGES AND MIRACLES.

BEDE'S treatise "On Thunder" is very curious.[1] It is full of the superstitions of the time, which every one seems to have been ready to accept; but the manner in which Bede keeps himself personally clear of responsibility for any of his statements is most remarkable. He had been requested to collect the opinions of learned writers on the events which thunder foretold according to the day of the week, the month, &c., of its occurrence. He gives the received presages for the four winds, the twelve months, and the seven days of the week; and in every case, without exception, he expressly states that he only gives an account of what others have discovered. The shifts to which he is put to vary his phrases are amusing. Twice, and twice only, he contents himself with the remark, "as they say." For thunder with an east wind, which signifies "the copious effusion of human blood," he quotes "the traditions of subtle philosophers." For thunder with a west wind, signifying "a very bad pestilence," he quotes "wise men in their exceeding subtlety actively investigating the presages of events." For thunder with a south wind,

[1] Bede does not mention this work in the list of his writings (*see* pp. 18, 19).

signifying "a great destruction of the inhabitants of the seas," he quotes "philosophers of sagacious disposition, who, by intellectual study and great prudence, have noted the presages of events." For thunder with a north wind, signifying "the death of the worst sinners, viz., pagans and perverts," he relies upon "the subtlety of those who have taken in hand to investigate the causes of events." Through the twelve months of the year he rings the changes on the activity, subtlety, and sagacity of the philosophers. By the time he comes to the end of the seven days of the week he is in extreme straits for something fresh to say. For thunder on Friday, signifying "the slaughter of the king," or "a mighty war with much slaughter," he quotes "the noble teachers who almost from the cradle have been fed and nourished on the breast of maternal Philosophy, their intellects adorned by most careful and acute contemplation, and the varied flowers of philosophic subtlety." And for thunder on Saturday, signifying either "a mighty pestilence," or "a very great war," he quotes the "philosophers, who with practised knowledge, according to the excessive ardour of their most sagacious disposition, have attempted to discern by subtle intellectual speculation, the causes and presages of events." The whole treatise might be a satire upon the folly of those who believed that natural phenomena were prophetic of remarkable events in such a manner that their presages could be tabulated. The fact that some of the coincident presages are of the most contradictory character, would seem to point in

the same direction. Thus, if thunder came on one of the Tuesdays in January or November, it signified, by coming on a Tuesday, most copious abundance of fruits of the earth, and by coming in January, that fruits of the earth would fail, or in November, that there would be barrenness of everything. And the presages are so arranged that there are only twenty-nine days in the whole year on which thunder can mean anything really good, and on those twenty-nine days it is subject to the presages of the wind, which, as will be seen from the wind portents given above, might considerably discount the amount of good. But there can be no doubt that the writer was in earnest. He commences his treatise with the statement that he is aware of the violence with which it will be attacked, and he begs the special prayers of Herefrid, at whose request he wrote it, on the ground that he will need his prayers under the odium which the appearance of claiming prophetic powers will bring upon him. This will in itself account for the extreme care with which he evades all responsibility for his statements ; but there is nothing else in his works which in any way suggests that those who claimed to have a foresight into the future, or even to work miracles, ran any risks such as those which reputed witches and wizards ran in the time of the Scottish Solomon. On the contrary, Bede's Life of St. Cuthbert, as we have seen, as also the later parts of his Ecclesiastical History, are full of stories of miracles, carefully attested by many witnesses, and told in honour of the saints by whose

power or prayers they were wrought. And there can be no doubt at all that Bede himself entirely believed in the existence and frequent display of miraculous power in Northumbria and other parts of England, his belief going so far that he records as miracles many events which had nothing miraculous about them.

It is evident, too, that the stories of miracles were generally believed in his time. The manner in which he relates miraculous stories without any comment is sufficient to show this. There is direct evidence of it, also, in his account of the compilation of the Life of St. Cuthbert—a history full of miracle. When he had finished the life, he submitted it, as we have seen already, before publication—or rather, as the equivalent of publication in those times, before allowing it to be transcribed—to the monastery in which Cuthbert had lived. The monks read it, and considered it carefully, and gave their testimony to its accuracy as a faithful account of their saint's life. Thus the story of Cuthbert's many miracles was held to be true by those among whom his life had been spent.

One or two examples, taken haphazard from the later parts of Bede's "Ecclesiastical History," will illustrate the claims to miraculous powers made on behalf of saints and relics in those ages. They will at the same time give incidentally some further idea of the manner of life of important ecclesiastics. By going to the later parts of the history for our examples, we obtain accounts of miracles which have the actual attestation of those who took part in them, some of whom related the details to Bede with their own mouth.

After his "Life of Cuthbert" was written, Bede received a number of fresh stories of miracle connected with that saint. These he gives in the fourth book of the History, prefacing them with an account of the discovery by the brethren of Lindisfarne that the body of Cuthbert remained fresh and lifelike, and its joints pliable, eleven years after death. In the course of this account, by the way, we find that Cuthbert's successor, Eadbert, made a practice of spending the forty days of Lent in perfect solitude, on a remote bit of land surrounded by the sea. The contrast between the life of a bishop of Durham, and the demands upon his time, in those days and these, could scarcely be brought out more strongly.

There was in the monastery at Lindisfarne a brother whose name was Bethwegen, whose office it was to attend to the wants of visitors to the monastery. He was a great favourite with every one, and was a man of much piety. He had been washing the linen in the sea on one occasion, and when returning to the monastery, he was seized with palsy, one side of his body being completely paralyzed. He managed to drag himself to the church, and prostrated himself before Cuthbert's tomb. Falling into a stupor, he felt a large and broad hand touch his head on the injured side, and he was immediately made whole from head to foot.

Another story is made vivid by Bede's introductory remark that the miracle occurred "three years ago," and was related to him by the brother on whom it was wrought. The brother had a swelling on his

eyelid, which grew so much as to threaten the loss of his eyesight. The doctors fomented it in vain,[1] and then they disagreed. Some said it must be cut off; others said that would be worse than the disease. It happened that one of the priests of the monastery, Thridred, who was abbat when Bede wrote, had kept in a box some of the hair of the sainted Cuthbert, taken from his body when it was exhumed eleven years after his death. This box he entrusted one day to the brother with the swelling on his eyelid. The brother, by a salutary instinct, took some of the hair from the box and applied it to the eyelid. This was —"as he is wont to say"—about the second hour of the day. He went about his business, and four hours later he chanced to touch his eyelid, when he found it as sound as the other.

Guthfrid, afterwards Abbat of Lindisfarne, told Bede of a miracle which had happened to him and two other brethren. They had gone in a boat to the island of Farne to speak with a hermit who had taken up his abode there. When they were halfway back again, a violent storm came on, and death appeared to be imminent. In their distress they saw the hermit, Ethelwald, come out of his cave and call upon God. The storm at once assuaged; they got safe to shore; and as soon as they had dragged their boat to a safe distance from the sea, the storm came on again and raged for a whole day.

[1] The remedy for swollen eyes in the Saxon leech-book was less simple than this:—take a live crab, put his eyes out, and put him alive again into water; and put the eyes upon the neck of the man who hath need; he will soon be well.

Cuthbert was not the only worker of miracles in those times. Berthun, Abbat of Inderawuda,[1] who was alive when Bede wrote his History, used to tell the following story of Bishop John of Hexham, who ordained Bede. There was a certain retired dwelling, near the church of Hagulstad,[2] but on the other side of the Tyne. It was surrounded by a narrow wood and an earthen mound, and was a cemetery dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel. Here Bishop John used to come whenever he had an opportunity, and especially in Lent, to pray and read quietly with a few companions. In the village near there was a dumb man, who, in addition to that affliction, had some disease of the scalp, which prevented the hair from growing on the top of his head. It grew lower down, but that was no improvement, for it stood out bristling in a ring round his head. Bishop John sent for this man, and had a little hut made for him within the inclosure of the cemetery. On the second Sunday in Lent he called the dumb man into his presence and told him to put out his tongue. The bishop made the sign of the Cross on the tongue and told him to draw it back into his mouth and say "Yes." "Gae," said the man, which in the then English language meant "yes." "Say A," said the bishop. "A," said the man. "Say B," said the bishop. "B," said the man. They went through the alphabet, and then got into syllables and words and sentences. The first effect must have been rather trying, for we are told

[1] Beverley. [2] Hexham.

that he talked nearly the whole of that day and all the next night as long as he could keep awake. Not satisfied with this success, the bishop put the man's head into the hands of a doctor,[1] aiding his skill by blessings and prayers, and the scalp became sound and a good head of hair grew. Thus, as Bede sums up, the poor man became possessed of good looks, a ready tongue, and very beautifully crisp and curly hair. The bishop offered to take the fortunate fellow into his own household, but life was brighter to him now and he preferred to go home.

Two of this bishop's miracles were wrought when he was visiting great men for the purpose of consecrating their churches. About two miles from the monastery a certain Earl Puch had a country house, where his wife had long lain ill; for three weeks she had not been moved from her bed. After the consecration of the church, the earl asked the bishop to dine with him. The bishop refused, saying he must get back to dinner. Probably he was afraid to face a Saxon noble's feasting. The earl pressed him to stay, and vowed that if he would break fast in his house he would give alms to the poor. Bede's informant, who accompanied the bishop, joined his entreaties to those of the earl, being not indisposed to partake of secular hospitality. At length the bishop yielded. He had

[1] The Saxon leech-book had remedy for this as for everything:—If a man's hair fall off, work him a salve; take the mickle wolf's bane, and viper's bugloss, and the netherward part of burdock, and ferdwort; work the salve out of these worts and butter on which no water hath come.

already sent to the earl's wife some of the holy water he had blessed for the consecration of the church, with instructions to apply it both outwardly and inwardly.[1] The lady had done as she was bidden, and had been healed. On the bishop's arrival she presented the cup to him and his companions, and she continued to serve them with drink as long as the meal lasted, ministering to them after the example of Peter's mother-in-law. The other occasion was at the consecration of Earl Addi's church. The earl begged the bishop to pay a visit to one of his servants, who had lost the use of his limbs: he was supposed to be at the point of death; indeed, the coffin had been prepared. The earl was sure that if only the bishop would lay his hand upon him and bless him, he would even yet be healed. Addi was moved to tears in the earnestness of his request, and the bishop consented to see the man. He found him lying all but dead, with a coffin ready at his side. He said a prayer, gave him the blessing, and left him with what Bede calls the usual speech of comforters, "I hope you will soon be better." They then sat down to dinner, and before long a message came that the ser-

[1] Holy water was an ingredient in the Saxon leech's somewhat complicated cure for "Lent addle" (typhus fever):—Work to a drink wormwood, everthront, lupin, waybrond, ribwort, chervil, attorlothe, feverfue, alescandus, bishopwort, lovage, sage, cassock, in foreign ale; add holywater and springwort. Holy water was employed in making a somewhat similar drink for a fiend-sick person; in this case the potion was to be drunk out of a church bell.

vant was thirsty and would like some wine. The earl sent him some at once, and it had such an effect upon him that he got up and dressed himself and joined the bishop and the other guests, saying that he would be glad to dine with them. They invited him to sit down, he greatly enjoyed his dinner, and lived happy for many years.

Herebald, Abbat of Tynemouth, told Bede of a miracle which Bishop John had wrought in his favour. When he was a young man living with the saint, and studying reading and singing, but not altogether weaned as yet from youthful pleasures, he and a number of other youths accompanied John in one of his expeditions on horseback. In the course of their journey, they came to a large level piece of ground, well suited for a race. They begged their master to let them try their horses,—the lay youths especially, as Herebald used to tell. He at first refused, saying it was an idle request; but after a time he gave his consent, with the proviso that Herebald did not race with the rest. Herebald begged hard to be allowed to race, for he was on an excellent horse which the bishop had given him; but he could not get leave. The sight of his companions racing was too much for him, and he set off without leave, the bishop calling out after him reproachfully. In a very short time the horse made an unexpected leap over a hole in the ground, and Herebald was thrown. On all the plain there was only one stone, and exactly on that one stone was Herebald landed head first. He put one hand to his head to break the fall, but his thumb

was broken and his skull was fractured. As he lived to tell the tale in his old age, it is unnecessary to say that he was saved from death by a miracle, wrought in his favour by his forgiving master.[1]

It is worthy of notice that although Bede had in a few cases actually conversed with persons on whom these "miracles" had been wrought, the events had in almost all cases occurred some considerable time before Bede wrote, as much as a generation before. They were almost without exception things of the past, stories told of the early heroes of Christianity in the land. Bede could not or did not name any one living in his time who had any claim to miraculous power. He does, however, state that miracles were still wrought in his time by relics. We have seen the efficacy of the wood of Oswald's cross. We have also an account of frequent miracles wrought at the tomb of Chad. A man out of his mind had lodged on the spot for a night, unobserved by the guardians of the tomb, and in the morning he went

[1] If Herebald had been left to the secular leech, he might have been treated in accordance with the Saxon prescription from Apuleius :—If a man's head be broken, take the herb betony, scrape it and rub it very small to dust, then take by two drachms weight and swallow it in hot beer; the head healeth very quickly after the drink. Or the Saxon leech-book might have been followed : Take betony, bruise it, and lay it on the head above, then it unites the wound and healeth it. And take garden cress, such as waxeth of itself; put it in the nose, that the smell and juice may get to the head. And if the brain be exposed, take the yolk of an egg and mix with honey, and fill the wound and swathe up with tow; and so let it alone.

forth in his right mind. The place of the sepulchre was a wooden monument, like a small house; there was a hole in the wall, through which men put their hands and brought out some of the dust, which they gave in water to sick men and cattle as a general specific. Bede asserts that this remedy continued to be efficacious in his time, Chad having died about the year of Bede's birth. Similarly Bishop Earconwald of London, who died a year or two later, left behind him a miraculous influence. His horse-litter, in which he had travelled when he was out of health, was kept by his disciples as a cure for agues and other distempers. The litter would probably not exist long, for Bede relates that chips of it were carried to sick persons, and they healed them.

On a review of Bede's writings as a whole, we may fairly say that the miraculous influence claimed for illustrious missionaries was confined to the first and second generation of Christian teachers in the land. To say that even in the first and second generation there was no such influence at work would be to say more than we are entitled to say. In the earliest years of a mission, as the experience of times later than those of Bede has shown, there are occasions on which it is very difficult to say whether the Divine power which the Christian believes to be really working has wrought openly, whether the Lord has, in fact, in the sight of men confirmed the words of His Apostles with signs following.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STATE OF MORALS IN BEDE'S TIME.

It has been remarked that Bede's sermons throw no light upon the state of society in his time. They were not addressed to a mixed audience, and they did not profess to deal with subjects relating to practical life or with ordinary moral questions. We have, however, a long letter which he wrote to Archbishop Egbert of York, and in this we find many references to the prevailing state of morals. The picture he draws is a dark one; and he remarks, towards the end of his letter, that if he were to write in detail about drunkenness, gluttony, and debauchery, the letter would extend to an immense length. If the ordinary date of Bede's death be correct, we have in this letter some of his last words.

Egbert, to whom this interesting letter was addressed, was the cousin of King Ceolwulf, who reigned in Northumbria from 729 A.D. to 737. He was Archbishop of York, and head of the great cathedral school of that city. Bede, having spent some days with him in study and interchange of ideas, was invited to repeat his visit in the following year. His state of health prevented his accepting this invitation, and, in consequence, he wrote at considerable length some of the things he had intended to say to the archbishop, had he been able to pay him another visit. The main subject of the letter is the covetous-

ness of bishops, and the disorderliness of many establishments which called themselves religious houses. Incidentally we learn a good deal on points which would not naturally be included under those heads.

The conduct of the bishops in general seems to have been unsatisfactory. Bede urges the archbishop himself to abstain with episcopal dignity from unseemly conversation, and from the evils of an unrestrained tongue. He advises him to read carefully and often the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, as specially suited to his position, and also the *Pastoral Care* of Pope Gregory. Above all things, he should surround himself with devout persons—the best check upon impurity of speech or action. Of some bishops it was commonly reported that they had no pious or continent men near them; their companions were men given to rioting and drunkenness, thinking more of feeding the body than of nourishing the mind with heavenly sacrifices.

Egbert's diocese was so large that he could not visit every village and hamlet in the course of one year. Bede presses upon him the necessity of providing sufficient assistance in this respect by appointing active parochial clergy in all villages. These were to preach, to celebrate the holy mysteries, and, especially, to perform the rite of Baptism in all cases where they had the opportunity. They must be urged by Egbert to make all persons who did not know Latin learn by heart the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed in their own tongue, the latter to be said early every morning, the former still more frequently. Bede adds, in connection with this poin

that he has often given an English translation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer to priests who were ignorant of Latin. What a picture this offers of the state of things for which he thus provided some sort of remedy,—the priest repeating words of which he did not know the meaning, the congregation listening in ignorance as complete.

We find an illustration of the ignorance of priests in a story told by Bede, of a miracle wrought by Bishop John of Hexham, on Herebald, afterwards Abbat of Tynemouth. Herebald told Bede that after he had had a fall from his horse,[1] which must have proved fatal but for the intercession of John, the bishop asked him whether he knew for certain that he had been baptized. Herebald said there could be no question about it; and he named the priest who had performed the ceremony. "Then," the bishop rejoined, "you are not rightly baptized. For I know the man, and though he was ordained priest, he was too slow to learn the offices of catechising and baptizing; and I had to order him to desist from the attempt to perform them." The bishop at once proceeded to catechise Herebald; and, after some time, he baptized him. The Canons of the Church of England in Anglo-Norman times show that this ignorance of priests was by no means confined to Anglo-Saxon times. And it will be remembered that the "hocus pocus" of the conjurer is said to be the layman's imitation of the ignorant priest's pronunciation of the *hoc est corpus* at the consecration of the ele-

[1] See page 169.

ments in the Eucharist, by which the priest was supposed to perform a miracle.

Other dioceses were as large in proportion, and were still more neglected. There were many outlying places on the hills and among the woods where no bishop had been seen for many years; nay, where there was no one to teach the people the difference between good and evil. The source of this mischief was the covetousness of bishops. Every such hamlet paid tribute to the bishop, and for filthy lucre's sake bishops undertook a much larger number of parishes than they could possibly attend to. In this way the rite of confirmation, on the importance of which Bede insists, was very generally neglected. The remedy was, the appointment of more bishops; but the kings had been so careless and profuse in assigning one district after another to existing bishops, that it was hard to find any place for a new see. Still, since the reigning king was Egbert's first cousin, Bede argued that the opportunity was a favourable one for extending and completing the ecclesiastical establishment of the kingdom. Pope Gregory had intended in Augustine's time that the metropolitan see of York should have twelve suffragan bishops, and a great effort ought to be made to carry out this idea. Ceolwulf, it may be remarked, was himself much interested in Church matters, and it was at his instigation that Bede set about his Ecclesiastical History; indeed, two years after this, the king was tonsured and became a monk.

The question of the subdivision of bishoprics was no new one in Northumbria, and it had before this

time led to very serious results. Egfrid, the king of Northumbria, and Theodore, the famous archbishop of Canterbury, had agreed that the vast Northumbrian diocese over which Wilfrid ruled—that Wilfrid who had played so important a part at the Council of Whitby—must be subdivided. Wilfrid offered an unflinching resistance to the plan, and he was in consequence deposed by the authority of the king and parliament, as we should say. The see of Northumbria was divided into two bishoprics, York and Hexham. Against the sentence of deposition Wilfrid appealed to Rome. He was, as we have seen, an ardent Romanizer, and he was the first man who ever appealed to Rome against the decision of any court in this island. Pope Agatho decided in his favour, and sent over a Papal letter threatening the curse of an everlasting anathema if the king and his council did not restore Wilfrid to his undivided bishopric. The king and his council determined that the appeal was an offence against the realm, and they put Wilfrid in prison, where he remained till the king's aunt procured his release; he was then exiled. Such was the manner in which our Saxon forefathers received the interference of a foreign bishop. It should be added, that the threatened anathema was not pronounced. The terrors of Rome were not so terrible then as they became later, for when this same pope Agatho excommunicated the Archbishop of Ravenna, the archbishop answered by excommunicating the Pope.

With a view to providing funds for the new bishoprics, Bede had a practical suggestion to make, which

throws great light on the evils attendant upon the monastic system in such times. He proposed, first of all, that some of the large monasteries should be appropriated for the foundation of episcopal sees, the opposition of the monks being got over by putting into their hands the election of the bishop, who should also be abbat. In cases where the funds of the monastery would not bear the additional charge entailed by the necessary expenses of an active bishop, there were only too many so-called monasteries which might well be suppressed by synodical authority and annexed to the new sees. Bede describes these monasteries as very numerous and very large. The common saying about them was that they were of no use to God or man; for the life of the inmates was not godly, and the property, being free from secular claims, provided no assistance against the barbarians. Hence, any one who did what he could to meet the pressing requirements of the times, by annexing such monasteries to episcopal sees, would do an act of virtue, not of confiscation. If Egbert and the king did not take some prompt steps in the way of cancelling the grants of former kings, on the one hand religion would cease altogether, on the other there would be no one to defend the country against the barbarians. Already so much land was absorbed by these foundations, that there was none left to give to the sons of nobles and of retired soldiers, so that a large number of young men were at a loose end, some deserting their country and going across the seas, others living a life of the grossest license at home.

This introduces the mention of what Bede describes as a greater scandal still. Men who had no knowledge or love of the monastic life, purchased grants of land from the king under pretence of desiring to found monasteries, and had the grants made to them and their heirs for ever. They then erected buildings, collected a number of worthless persons, outcast monks or dependants of their own, whom they tonsured, and over this medley they ruled, living most disgraceful lives, some married, some worse. Many of them got lands for their wives in the same way, and established disorderly convents, over which the wives ruled. To such an extent was this wicked folly carried, that for the thirty years preceding the time of Bede's writing, that is, for the whole time since king Alfrid's[1] death, there had never once been a prefect who did not furnish himself with an establishment of the kind, and his wife also, if he had one. Bede plaintively remarks that this evil might have been put down by synodical and episcopal authority, but unfortunately the bishops themselves fostered it for the sake of the money they earned by confirming the grants of the kings.

Egbert had informed Bede that he claimed the right to visit all monasteries in his diocese, a right which he denied to the king and nobles, except in cases where the inmates had committed some offence against the king himself. Bede replied that the arch-

[1] Alfrid, king of Northumbria, died A.D. 705. This date shews that the letter must have been written late in Bede's life, since the thirty years which had elapsed since Alfrid's death would make the date of the letter A.D. 735, the year commonly assigned as that of Bede's death.

bishop was in consequence responsible for the state of things which prevailed in many monasteries, and urged him to proceed against unworthy abbats and abbesses and also against disobedient monks. For the people who were not in religious houses equal care must be taken. Competent teachers of the Word must be provided, to instruct them in all the practical parts of the Christian life. They must be taught to use the sign of the Lord's Cross frequently, as a support against the continuous snares of unclean spirits. They were to be advised how salutary it was to receive daily the Body and Blood of the Lord, according to the practice of Christ's Church throughout Italy, France, Africa, Greece, and the East. This point had been so much neglected by the teachers of Northumbria, that even the most religious of the laity communicated very seldom, only at Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter.

Finally, Bede remarks, as has been said above, that if he dealt in a similar manner with the prevailing drunkenness, gluttony, and debauchery, his letter would be of unmeasurable length.

This is a dark picture, so dark that we might naturally expect to find in other parts of Bede's writings remarks of a similar character. But we do not find such remarks, or we find them very seldom. In the Ecclesiastical History there is a general absence of contemporaneous accounts of men or women of wicked lives, and in the Homilies there is an all but total absence of allusion to any prevalent vices. It may well be that Bede opened his heart to his friend

in a private letter, but did not feel called upon either to make his History a homily against vice, or to make his Homilies, preached to the brethren of Jarrow, a history of the vices in the world outside.

There are, however, various indications that if Bede had cared to do so, he might have given darker details than he has done. We have seen[1] that a certain priest, a certain layman, and a certain woman were specially mentioned by Drithelme as among the shrieking crew of those whom demons were dragging into the pit of destruction. We have seen, too, how evil a life had been led by the military officer of King, Coenred.[2] On one occasion, and only one, Bede departs from his usual practice, and enters into a detailed account of the evil life of a brother in a monastery. We cannot but understand that he is writing of a monk of Jarrow. He shall tell the tale in his own words.

"I knew a brother myself—would God I had not known him—a brother whom I could name if it would profit anything. He lived in a noble monastery, but he lived ignobly. He was diligently rebuked by the brethren and by the superiors, and was exhorted to turn to a better-disciplined life. He would not hearken, but yet he was borne with by them patiently, because they needed his help in temporal matters, for he was singularly skilful as a carpenter. He was much addicted to drunkenness and other vices. He would rather stay in his workshop night and day, than go to church to sing and pray and

[1] See page 87. [2] See page 142.

hear the word of God with his brethren. And so it happened to him, according to the saying, 'He that wills not into the gates of the church of his own will in humbleness to enter, shall needs into the gate of hell against his will in damnation be driven.' He fell sick, and being at the point to die, he called unto him the brethren, and with much groaning, like unto one damned, he told them that he had seen hell opened and Satan plunged in the depths of Tartarus, and Caiaphas and the rest who slew the Lord being tormented in the flames of vengeance. 'Nigh unto whom,' he said, 'I see a place of eternal perdition prepared for me.' The brethren urged him to do penance while yet he lived; but 'No,' he said, 'I have no time now to change my life, now that I myself have seen mine own judgment.' Since he held this language, he died without the viaticum of salvation, and his body was buried in the remotest part of the monastery, and none presumed to say masses for him, or to chant psalms, or even to pray."[1]

We may safely conclude that this was the usual manner of dealing with those who died impenitent in Bede's time.[1] And that the case of the carpenter was not singular, we may gather from Bede's statement that the account of his terrible death had brought many to do penance for their sins without delay, and from the fervent wish he expresses that the publication of the account in his History might produce a like effect on others.

Though this is the only case in which Bede speaks

[1] See also pages 141 and 142.

from his own personal experience of an evil life in a monastery, he gives a startling account of the state of things which prevailed among the nuns of Coldingham. He relates the story as it was told to him by his most reverend fellow-presbyter Edgils, who was living in the monastery of Coldingham at the time when the events occurred, and afterwards lived long at Jarrow, and died there.

There was among the inmates of Coldingham a monk, by name Adamnan, a Scot. He had committed some crime in early youth and had confessed to a priest, offering to fast for a whole week and stand all the night through praying. To fast for the whole week was too much for his strength, the priest replied; let him fast two or three days at a time for the present; he would return soon and tell him what to do as a permanency. The priest went over to Ireland and died there, leaving Adamnan under the promise to fast always two or three days at a time, and this promise he kept by eating only on Thursdays and Sundays.

One day Adamnan and a companion had gone out for some distance from the monastery, and as they returned they marked its lofty buildings. Adamnan wept over it, saying, "All these buildings which thou beholdest, whether public or private, shall in no long time be consumed with fire." The companion told this to Abbess Ebba on their return, probably on the principle that the inmate of a monastery is usually accompanied by one of his colleagues when he walks abroad, not as a check only upon his actions, but also as a reporter if need be. Ebba not unnaturally

made further inquiries. How did he come to know that her monastery was to be burned down? Then he told her. He had been busy one night in watchings and psalms, when one stood by his side at whose presence he was terrified. The visitant told him he did well to spend his night thus; few in that establishment did so; he had been round to all the cells and the beds, and had found no one but Adamnan occupied in heavenly things. Men and women, they were all either sleeping idly, or awake to sin. The very cells which had been specially made for prayer and reading were converted into dens for eating and drinking and story-telling, and other such things. The virgins who were vowed to God had laid aside the reverence which was a part of their profession, and, whenever they had any time to spare, devoted themselves to making dresses, to deck themselves out like brides or to obtain the friendship of men outside. The consequence would be, that fire would come down and devour the place. The abbess asked why Adamnan had not spoken sooner. Adamnan told her it was out of respect to her; the thing was not to happen in her time, and he did not wish to worry her. Either she or Adamnan's companion told the tale, and the inmates of the monastery were dreadfully alarmed. For a few days they gave up their sinful life, and subjected themselves to penance. But when the abbess died they returned to their old ways, and just when they were saying peace and safety, the blow fell. This was some few years after Bede's birth.

Bede's opportunities for observation of the life of people in general were very small, and we cannot expect to learn much from him on this point. It is sufficient to say that a hundred years before he was made priest the people were wholly given up to paganism. We have seen how on one or two occasions the innate paganism still shewed itself. There had not been that complete breaking off from pagan rites which we might at first have expected that the Roman missionaries would enforce. Augustine had specially referred the matter to Gregory, who had replied in a spirit which has generally been called sensible and wise, but is at least open to less favourable judgment. If the temples of idols were well built, the idols only were to be destroyed; the temples were to be purified with holy-water and kept as churches, so that the people might continue to frequent the accustomed places, and might hear the truth. They had been used to slaughter oxen to devils at certain times. Let them still slaughter oxen, but for festive purposes, so that on dedication days, and nativities, and so on, they might build huts and booths about the churches and enjoy themselves as they had been wont; only they must thank God for their sustenance, and so by degrees they would come to look upon these festivals of the Church with Christian eyes.

To this source we must attribute such of the festivities which accompany Christmas-tide as are independent of the joyousness of religious feeling. We find these festivities mentioned in the Life

of St. Cuthbert, when the saint was entreated to come out of his retirement and keep the feast with his brethren. He refused for some time, but at length he came forth and sat down with them, indulging in a good dinner, much merriment, and story-telling. Their enjoyment was spoiled by his mysterious hints of something terrible, which proved to be a pestilence that swept off almost all the brethren; but that does not affect the fact that Christmas Day, which coincided with one of the great pagan festivals, was kept then much as it is now. The use of holly and other evergreens is, of course, a survival of the huts made of boughs, in which our Saxon ancestors kept their pagan feast.

There was one part of Gregory's advice which led to a good deal of trouble. He spoke of the people being allowed to slaughter, for the purpose of feasting, the animals they had been accustomed to slay in sacrifice to their gods. We find from various canons of the Anglo-Saxon Church, that the love for horse-flesh could not be eradicated. The most idolatrous sacrifice the Teutonic races could offer was a horse, and at their most idolatrous feasts they fed on the flesh of the horse. In times rather later than those of Bede, when the Anglo-Saxon Church was being put into order and was framing its laws, it is clear that the propensity to eat horse-flesh was looked upon as much the same thing as a propensity to relapse into paganism, or to keep the heart of a pagan with the name of a Christian, and it was accordingly strongly condemned in one council after another.

CONCLUSION.

It is natural to ask how far the example set by Bede so early in the Christian life of the Anglo-Saxons was followed by those who came after; how far he can be said to have founded, or been the precursor of, a school of learning.

The answer to this question is easy, and is satisfactory. It is not too much to say that the Anglo-Saxon Church was in the van of learning and study for a hundred and thirty years after Bede's death, down to the sad times of the Danish invasions. Jarrow, and Lindisfarne, and Hexham were the chief centres of light and knowledge and of patient study in the far north of England. Besides the labours of Bede, we find Bishop Eadfrid, of Lindisfarne, a contemporary of his, accomplishing a translation of the Gospels into Anglo-Saxon, which is believed to exist still, in the original manuscript, in the British Museum. But the most important school in the north, perhaps in the whole of England, was the great cathedral school of York, under its successive patrons Egbert and Albert.

We have seen Egbert as the friend and correspondent of Bede, a near relative of the reigning prince, the head of the ecclesiastical system of the whole kingdom of Northumbria, bishop or archbishop of

York. He was the first bishop of the northern kingdom who received the pall from Rome after the collapse of Paulinus's ill-cemented missionary work. He fostered learning in his diocese, and especially in his own city. Alcuin told afterwards what he was as an archbishop; and Alcuin must have known, if any one did, for he was himself one of the chief glories of the famous school of York. It was a happy time, Alcuin says, when Egbert was bishop and his relative was king. They ruled each his own province in perfect concord; the one was as good as the other was brave; the bishop distinguished for deeds of mercy, the king for active energy. The king died a monk in Egbert's monastery only a year before Egbert himself died; so that in death they were not long divided. Egbert's chief work, in a literary sense, was to draw up a series of rules for the regulation of a priest's dealing with penitents, and to make a collection of ecclesiastical canons in the native tongue. And he founded the school of York.

The cathedral school which now exists in York has proved itself in this generation no unworthy successor of the Anglo-Saxon school. But its foundation dates only from the reign of Philip and Mary. The school of Egbert and Albert, of Eanbald and Alcuin, was a college for educational purposes, attached to the monastic institution, in which the monks and unmarried priests lived under the immediate supervision of the archbishop. Egbert secured for his school the services of Albert as master. If we may trust Alcuin's report,—and everything seems to confirm it,

the school and the diocese were equally fortunate in this selection of a master. Albert was good, just, pious, and liberal; he taught the faith in the spirit of love; he could be stern to those who would not yield to his persuasion; he was a friend to the poor, the fatherless, the oppressed. The youth who frequented his school had the opportunity of studying everything that was then known. Languages, then called "grammar," mathematics, natural history, rhetoric, law, poetry, astronomy,—these and other branches of study formed the liberal curriculum; and with and beyond all, the exposition of the Holy Scriptures. Albert had a keen eye for youthful promise, and when he found among his pupils one of whom he thought that he might make a scholar or an eminent Christian, he took all possible pains with him. He travelled on the continent in search of additional means and improved methods of instruction; he visited Rome as the centre of the Western Church. On his return, the kings of the south would fain have kept him among them, but he remained true to his home at York, and took up again his interrupted task of teaching. What his learning was, and his zeal in collecting the means of study, may be gathered from an abridged list of the books in his possession at the time when he retired from active life, which his pupil and successor and biographer, Alcuin, has left us. There were writings of Roman historians, philosophers, and poets; the philosophical writings of Aristotle; treatises on grammar; the works of his countrymen, Aldhelm, Bede, and Wil-

brord; and, best of all, a goodly collection of the fathers,—Basil, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Leo, Gregory, and others. They were so numerous that he had built a library for them.

On Egbert's death, the popular voice designated Albert, who, like Egbert, was of the royal race, as his successor in the archbishopric. He became archbishop, and abundantly proved the wisdom of the choice. Alcuin tells us how, like a good shepherd, he fed his flock with the food of the Divine Word; how he guarded the lambs from the wolf, and bore on his shoulders the sheep that had gone astray. He did not allow the manifold affairs of his high position to curtail his study of the Scriptures. H boldly rebuked vice, whether in the person of com moner, earl, or king.

For ten years he retained the headship of the school along with the archbishopric. He then determined to resign both, and to retire into private life in the monastery. His two favourite pupils succeeded him, Eanbald as bishop, Alcuin as head of the cathedral school. And Alcuin is by far the most prominent figure in the educational progress of the Western world in those times.

Alcuin was born about the year of Bede's death, or seven years before that event, if the later date of 742 A.D. be accepted for the year of his death. He was educated under Albert at York, and became, as we have seen, Albert's successor. He was already famous for his learning, not in England only, but on

the Continent; so much so, that when he went to Rome to obtain the pall for Eanbald of York, Albert's successor in the archbishopric, Charlemagne persuaded him to take charge of the education of his sons, with all the educational affairs of his vast empire. Alcuin received the consent of his own king and the archbishop before accepting Charlemagne's offer; and he became the master of the palatine or court school at Paris, and Minister of Education for the empire. One of his first cares was to remedy a specially evil result of the anarchy which had for so many years prevailed in the countries which Charlemagne had at last brought to something like order. The copies of the Scriptures and of service books had in many places disappeared altogether; in other places there were very inferior and incorrect copies, made by ignorant hands. Alcuin examined some of the best manuscripts, and then had them copied in large numbers, and the copies were sent out to cathe drals and important churches and abbeys, where they were still further multiplied. When this great work was accomplished, Alcuin set about furnishing the empire with the means of acquiring secular knowledge. He did not find in all France, and of course not in Germany, any such libraries as he had left in several places in England. He obtained permission from Charlemagne to send over some of his own pupils to England to copy the chief treasures in the library at York, which he knew so well. And thus Saxon England gave to France—and in a less degree to Germany—the learning which it had itself derived

from Theodore and Hadrian in the years preceding the birth of Bede. Theodore landed in England in 668 A.D., and found England in a state of ignorance; and in less than a hundred and twenty years his work had borne such fruit that Englishmen were at the head of learning in the Western world.

They were also—and no more fitting conclusion could be found for remarks on the state of England in the seventh and eighth centuries—at the head of missionary enterprise in Europe. Wilfrid of York was cast by a storm on to the coast of Friesland, and converted multitudes of the pagans there. Wilbrord of Ripon took up the work which Wilfrid had begun; he baptized Pepin d'Heristal, great-grandfather of Charlemagne, and was made by him bishop of the Frieslanders, Pope Sergius giving him the name of Clement. Pepin's son, Charles Martel, who saved Europe from the Saracens by the great battle of Tours, settled Wilbrord at Utrecht, where he died as archbishop, at a very advanced age, about the time of Bede's death. Two Saxon monks, Hewald the white and Hewald the black, went to Saxony and preached Christianity there. They were martyred near Cologne, in the year 695. The Friesland mission pushed its work even into Prussia, and with fair success; but political changes broke up the mission for a time. Winfrid of Crediton, a monk of Exeter, joined Wilbrord at Utrecht about the year 716. He preached in Hesse and in Friesland. In 723 he was consecrated by Gregory II. as missionary bishop of the Germans east of the Rhine, under the name of Boniface. For

thirty years he laboured in this vast and dangerous sphere, keeping up a constant correspondence with the pope, to whom he wrote with a frankness which few correspondents of popes have used. He founded the great archiepiscopal see of Mainz, and was martyred at length in the year 755 at Dockum, in East Friesland.

And so we take leave of our Saxon forefathers, at the happy time when they were the leaders of the Western world in divine and secular learning and in missionary work.

THE END.

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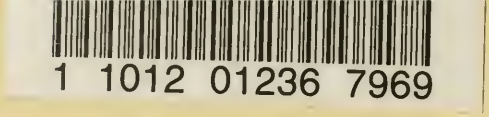
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